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ALL NEW STORIES COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE!

HEAVY METAL'S EVEN HEAVIER METAL

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HEAVY METAL's
EVEN HEAVIER METAL

HEAVY METAL'S EVEN HEAVIER METAL

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Publisher: Leonard Mogel

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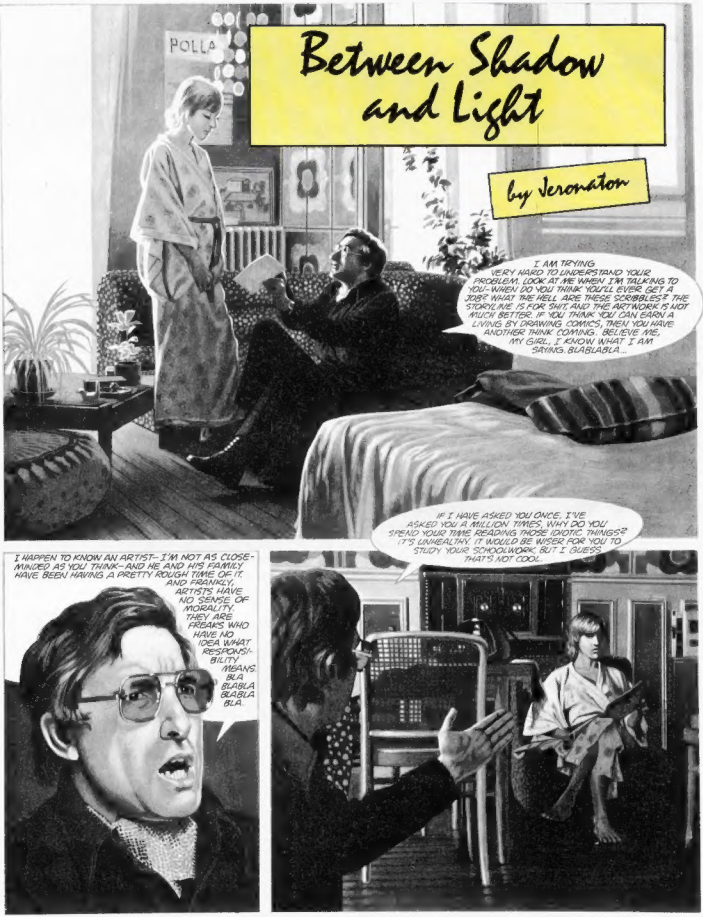
any eons ago, on a faraway planet called New York, the staff of Heavy Metal Magazine was discussing, with much satisfaction, but a bit of angst, the riches of science-fiction and fantasy material on hand, and nary a page to run it in. What to do!?! Anxiety prevailed! Fatter issues? No, too expensive! Wallpaper the subways in early Moebius? No, too dangerous! Tatoo our beloved children and pets and have them roam the streets of the Naked City? No! No! No! Not original enough!

Thus, a final alternative was opted for: a thirteenth issue. And if it works? A fourteenth and a fifteenth . . . .

So, what you've got here is a test. For the next sixty minutes, we are in control. Have the dog light your pipe and get your slippers, grab a seat, and enjoy. Wander through Egyptian tombs with Jeronaton; have your moon aligned by Gillon; and join the search for the last virgin on Earth.

And if we pass? Well, maybe a fourteenth and a fifteenth . . . .

Julie Simmons-Lynch
Editor


POLLA
Between Shadow and Light
by Jeronaton
I AM TRYING VERY HARD TO UNDERSTAND YOUR PROBLEM. LOOK AT ME WHEN I'M TALKING TO YOU! WHEN DO YOU THINK YOU'LL EVER GET A JOB? WHAT THE HELL ARE THESE SCRIBBLES? THE STORY, AH, IS FOR ONE! AND THE ARTWORK'S NOT MUCH BETTER. IF YOU THINK YOU CAN EARN A LIVING BY DRAWING COMICS, THEN YOU HAVE ANOTHER THINK COMING. BELIEVE ME, MY GIRL, I KNOW WHAT I AM SAYING. BLABLABLA...
IF I HAVE ASKED YOU ONCE, I'VE ASKED YOU A MILLION TIMES, WHY DO YOU SPEND YOUR TIME READING THOSE IDIOTIC THINGS? IT'S UNREALITY. IT WOULD BE WISER FOR YOU TO STUDY YOUR SCHOOLWORK. BUT I GUESS THAT'S NOT COOL.
I HAPPEN TO KNOW AN ARTIST- I'M NOT AS CLOSE-MINDED AS YOU THINK- AND HE AND HIS FAMILY HAVE BEEN HAVING A PRETTY ROUGH TIME OF IT. AND FRANKLY, ARTISTS HAVE NO SENSE OF MORALITY. THEY ARE FREAKS WHO HAVE NO IDEA WHAT RESPONSIBILITY MEANS. BLA BLABLA BLABLA BLA.

METAL
BLABLABLA... WHAT AN OLD FART. I'M BETTER OFF IN MY ROOM THAN WITH HIM.
ONE MORE YEAR AND THEN I CAN DO WHATEVER I WANT. THIS IS REALLY BECOMING MORE UNBEARABLE BY THE DAY.
ARE YOU THERE, STARR? WHAT I WOULDN'T GIVE SOMETIMES TO LIVE YOUR TRANQUIL LIFE.

HEY! WATCH OUT! YOU'LL BREAK SOMETHING!
PHEW! I'M GLAD YOU DIDN'T BREAK THIS. IT'S SORT OF LIKE MY MASCOT. YOU KNOW, WHAT I MEAN? HAVE YOU SEEN HOW DETAILED IT IS?
I'M NOT THIS PHARAOH MAJESTIC IN HIS HIERARCHICAL POSITION, FAR ABOVE THE VAIN PRESUMPTIONS OF MEN'T BOY. I WOULD HAVE LOVED TO LIVE IN THAT TIME!
3

OOOH!
I'M... I'M OSITARI. I AM YOUR REFLECTION. AT HOME IN EGYPT, WE CALL IT THE "KA."
WHO... WHO ARE YOU?
ME? I'M ISABELLE! HEY, YOU LOOK JUST LIKE ME! BUT WHY THE GET UP?
4

RAMSES?
I AM YOUR EGYPTIAN DOUBLE. I WAS SENT BY RAMSES, A FACSIMILE OF WHOM YOU HAVE IN YOUR POSSESSION.
YES, HE IS ON THIS SIDE OF THE MIRROR WITH ME. HE WANTS TO SEE YOU... HE'S BEEN WAITING A LONG TIME FOR YOU.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? THIS IS REALLY WEIRD!
BELIEVE ME, RAMSES IS JUST BEHIND ME. TRY TO KISS ME, PRETTY ISABELLE, AND YOU'LL SEE.

?
OOOH, WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ME?
RAMSES!

RAMSES II

RAMSES II IS THE LAST OF THE GREAT EGYPTIAN PHARAOHS. HE IS A PICTURESQUE MONARCH BLESSED WITH UNIQUE CHARMS, THE LEAST OF WHICH ARE BEAUTY, BRAVERY, AND SEDUCTION. SETI I, HIS FATHER, GUIDED EGYPT THROUGH THE DISASTROUS GOVERNMENTS OF AKHENATEN AND TUTANKHAMEN. RAMSES II WILL FOLLOW IN HIS FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS BY GIVING BACK THE PRODIGIOUS LUSTER, HIS COUNTRY ONCE KNEW TO ITS PEOPLE.

HE BEGAN BY ORGANIZING AN EXPEDITION TO THE GOLD MINES OF NUBIA, WHOSE PLUNDER ALLOWS THE STATE TREASURY TO STAND ON ITS OWN ONCE AGAIN. THE RESOURCES WILL GIVE TO THE STATE THE MEANS TO RECONQUER PALESTINE AND SYRIA WHO BROKE AWAY FROM THE EMPIRE.

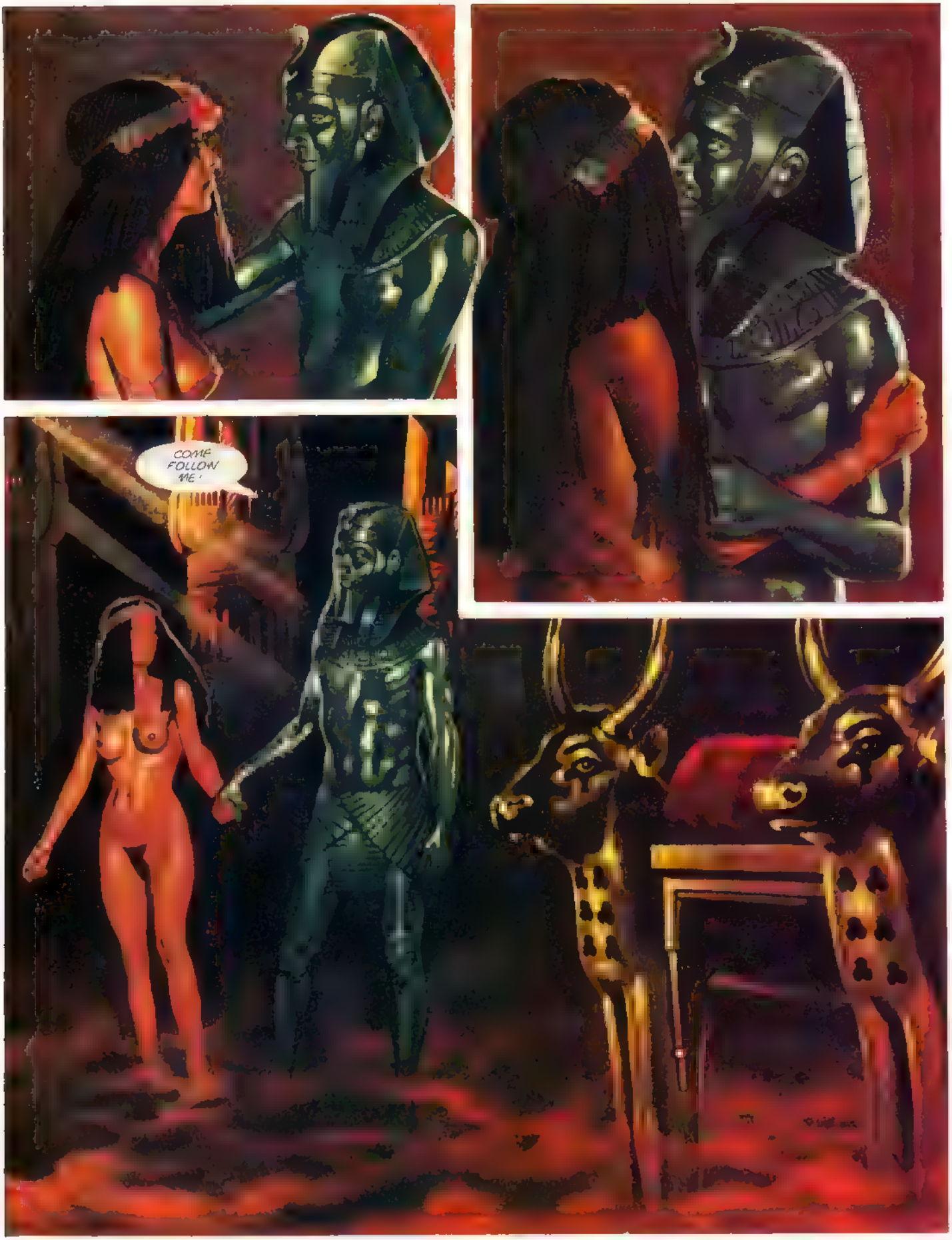
RAMSES II WAS ALSO THE PHARAOH OF THE BIBLICAL EXODUS, WITH THE AID OF HIS CAPTIVE JEWISH MANPOWER HE COVERED THE NILE VALLEY WITH NUMEROUS BUILDINGS.

HALF OF THE EGYPTIAN CONSTRUCTION WHICH HAS BEEN PASSED DOWN TO US IS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM.

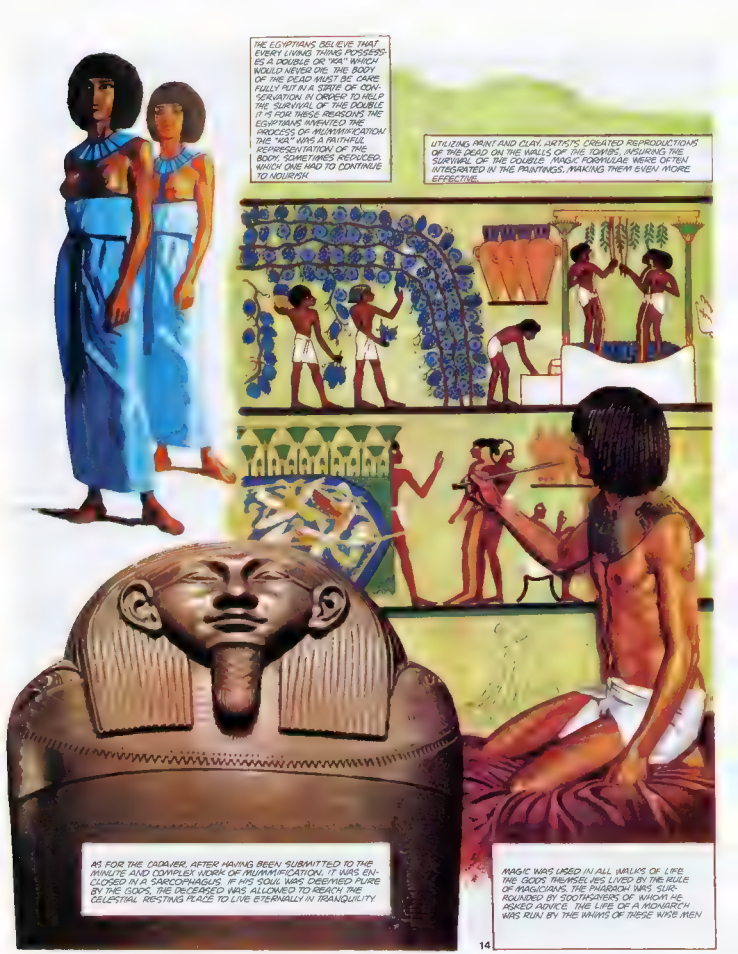
DESPITE CERTAIN RADICAL FORCES, HE WILL CONTINUE TO GOVERN EGYPT UNTIL THE AGE OF NINETY. ONE SINGLE POWER, HOWEVER, IS SUPERIOR TO HIS OWN: PRIESTS AND THEIR RELIGIONS, DOMINATE WITH MAGIC AND SUPERSTITION.

THE STATUETTE! IT'S GIGANTIC!
HELLO, OSITAR!!
WHO'S THAT? WAS THAT REALLY YOU TALKING?
YES, IT'S REALLY ME. DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU? NO MATTER. YOU ARE HERE NOW.
THIS CAN'T BE! YOU'RE... YOU'RE ALL BRONZE AND... OUR MEETING IS IMPOSSIBLE!
ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE TO THE BEING WHO LOVES. LOVE IS STRONGER THAN THE CENTURIES... STRONGER THAN DEATH. LOOK AT ME!

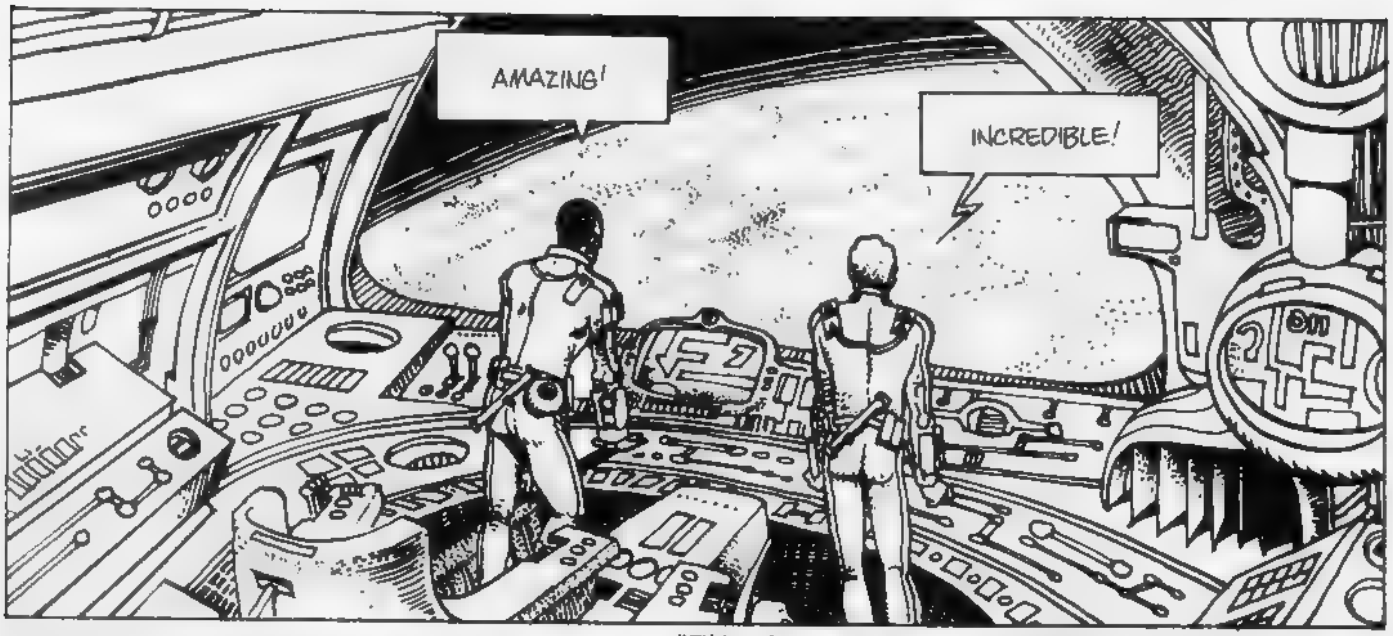
COME CLOSER DON'T BE AFRAID


COME FOLLOW ME!

IT'S MARVELOUS TO LIVE OUT A DREAM LIKE THIS.
ARE YOU SURE THAT THIS IS ALL A DREAM? THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE PRIESTS OF AMON IS IMMENSE.
AT THIS MOMENT YOU ARE BESIDE THE ETERNAL DOUBLE OF RAMSES II WHO, EVERY NIGHT, HAS BEEN AWAKENED BY DREAMS THOUGHTS OF A WOMAN LIKE YOU.
ALL OF THIS IS VERY DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE.
BY HIS ORDER--TO GIVE HIM PEACE OF MIND--THE WISE MEN OF EGYPT SEARCHED IN THE PAST AND THE PRESENT UNTIL THEY FINALLY FOUND YOU IN A FAR-OFF FUTURE.
I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT, BUT THANKS TO THE TINY STATUETTE YOU HOUSE, THE CONTACT HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED YOU ARE HERE NOW AND NOTHING MORE MATTERS. BE IN PEACE AND ABANDON ALL FEAR.


THE EGYPTIANS BELIEVE THAT EVERY LIVING THING POSSESSES A DOUBLE OR "KA" WHICH WOULD NEVER DIE. THE BODY OF THE DEAD MUST BE CAREFULLY PUT IN A STATE OF CONSERVATION IN ORDER TO HELP THE SURVIVAL OF THE DOUBLE. IT IS FOR THESE REASONS THE EGYPTIANS INVENTED THE PROCESS OF MUMMIFICATION. THE "KA" WAS A FAITHFUL REPRESENTATION OF THE BODY, SOMETIMES REDUCED, WHICH ONE HAD TO CONTINUE TO NOURISH.
UTILIZING PAINT AND CLAY, ARTISTS CREATED REPRODUCTIONS OF THE DEAD ON THE WALLS OF THE TOMBS, INSURING THE SURVIVAL OF THE DOUBLE. MAGIC FORMULAE WERE OFTEN INTEGRATED IN THE PAINTINGS, MAKING THEM EVEN MORE EFFECTIVE.
AS FOR THE CADAVER, AFTER HAVING BEEN SUBMITTED TO THE MINUTE AND COMPLEX WORK OF MUMMIFICATION, IT WAS ENCLOSED IN A SARCOPHAGUS. IF HIS SOUL WAS DEEMED PURE BY THE GODS, THE DECEASED WAS ALLOWED TO REACH THE CELESTIAL RESTING PLACE TO LIVE ETERNALLY IN TRANQUILITY.
MAGIC WAS USED IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE. THE GODS THEMSELVES LIVED BY THE RULE OF MAGICIANS. THE PHARAOH WAS SURROUNDED BY SOOTHSAYERS OF WHOM HE ASKED ADVICE. THE LIFE OF A MONARCH WAS RUN BY THE WHIMS OF THESE WISE MEN.
14

ISABELLE!
ISABELLE MARINER WHEN I CALL YOU!
OH, LOOK! SHE LEFT WITHOUT MAKING HER BED! THIS ROOM IS TRULY A HORROR!
THAT'S FUNNY! I ALWAYS THOUGHT THIS OBJECT HAD ONLY ONE FIGURE ON IT. HMMM! NOT THAT IT MATTERS IT'S JUST A PIECE OF JUNK ANYWAY
FIN



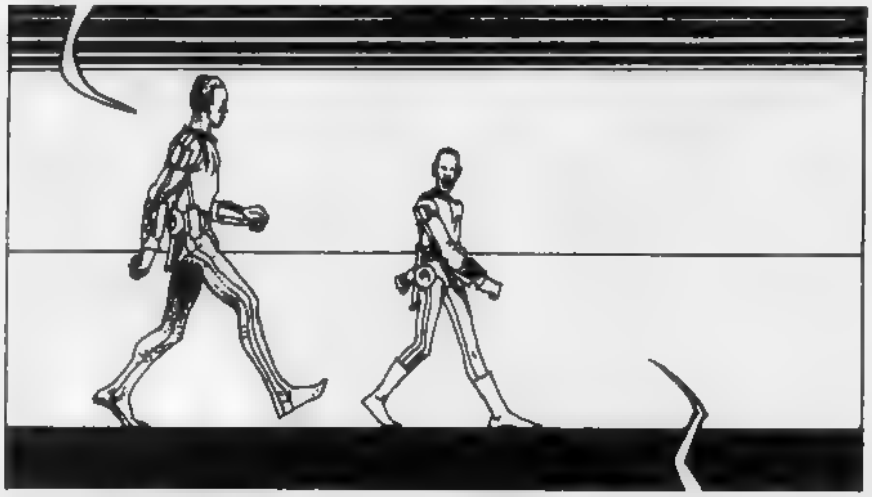
ARTIFACT by MOEBIUS

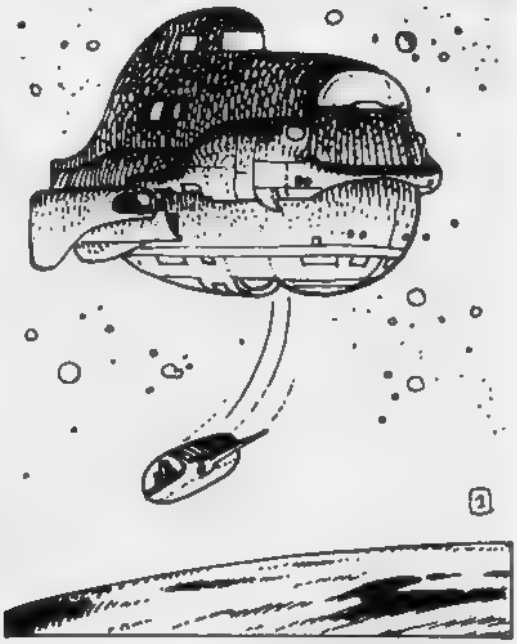
"THE DISCOVERY OF AN ARTIFICIAL OBJECT OR 'ARTIFACT' WAS A CONSIDERABLE EVENT FOR THE INTERSTELLAR VOYAGER: IT SIGNIFIED THE PRESENCE OF AN INTELLIGENCE."
H.V. VEGANT *OUR GALAXY* VOL. I

I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH A BIG TYPE-A* PLANET BEFORE!
IT'S ALMOST TWO HUNDRED TIMES THE SIZE OF EARTH. EVEN THE COMPUTER CAN'T BELIEVE IT!

*EARTH TYPE

THE SOUNDING PROBE INDICATES THAT THERE ARE ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS LAYERS OF BILLENNIUM ON THAT PLANET. NAB! THAT COULD MEAN A FORTUNE FOR US!

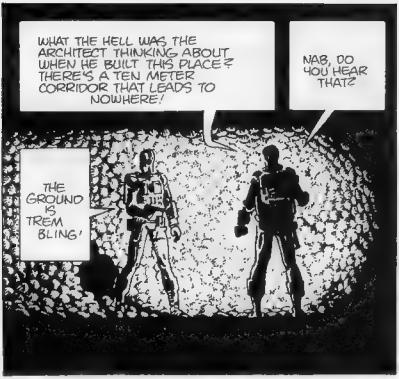




LET'S LEAVE THE OL' RATTLETRAP IN ORBIT! WE'LL USE THE GLIDER FOR THE PRELIMINARY WORK!

THE SEA!
THE WEIGHT IS ENORMOUS! WITHOUT OUR ANTI-G SPACESUITS, WE'D BE TRANSFORMED INTO SHIP BISCUITS IN A MATTER OF MICRO-SECONDS!
BEAR TWO DEGREES TO THE EAST. THE CARTO-ROB IS SHOWING TERRA FIRMA.
THE EARTH, THERE! A BEACH! IT'S EXACTLY LIKE MY NATIVE VENDIE, ONLY LARGER!
HE-!' LOOK OVER THERE! IT'S AN ARTIFACT!
A CHATEAU!

IT APPEARS TO BE UNINHABITED!
CUT THE FOOLISHNESS! YOU KNOW THE ORDERS IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES. COMMUNICATE THE REPORT TO THE TRAITOR GALAXY AND DON'T MAKE A MOVE UNTIL YOU HEAR FROM THEM!
THINK OF ALL OF THE LAYERS OF BILLENNIUM, NAB! AS YOU WELL KNOW, TRANTOR CAN'T STAND IT WHEN WE MAKE A DISCOVERY ON OUR OWN. THEY HATE SCIENTISTS!
THERE!.. AT THE BASE OF THAT TOWER... THERE'S AN OPENING!
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT. BESIDES, THESE RUINS SEEM TO BE DESERTED. LET'S GO!
WHATTAYA SEE?
NOTHING!
3

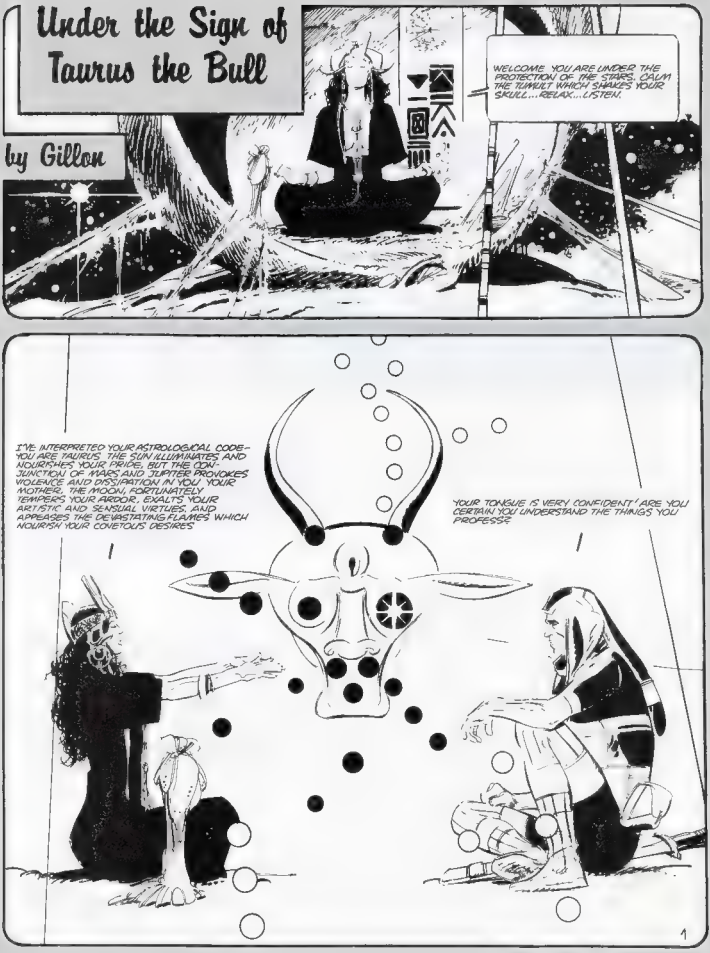

WHAT THE HELL WAS THE ARCHITECT THINKING ABOUT WHEN HE BUILT THIS PLACE? THERE'S A TEN METER CORRIDOR THAT LEADS TO NOWHERE!
NAB, DO YOU HEAR THAT?
THE GROUND IS TREMBLING!

AAAAAA

YOU LITTLE VANDAL! WAIT UNTIL YOUR FATHER GETS HOME! DESTROYING THAT SAND CASTLE LIKE THAT! AND JUST LOOK AT YOUR CLOTHES!
END

Under the Sign of Taurus the Bull

by Gillon

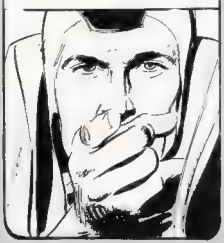

WELCOME. YOU ARE UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE STARS. CALM THE TUMULT WHICH SHAKES YOUR SKULL... RELAX... LISTEN.
I'VE INTERPRETED YOUR ASTROLOGICAL CODE— YOU ARE TAURUS. THE SUN ILLUMINATES AND NOURISHES YOUR PRIDE, BUT THE CONJUNCTION OF MARS AND JUPITER PROVOKES VIOLENCE AND DISSIPATION IN YOU. YOUR MOTHER, THE MOON, FORTUNATELY TEMPERS YOUR ARDOR, EXALTS YOUR ARTISTIC AND SENSUAL VIRTUES, AND APPEASES THE DEVASTATING FLAMES WHICH NOURISH YOUR CONVETOUS DESIRES.
YOUR TONGUE IS VERY CONFIDENT! ARE YOU CERTAIN YOU UNDERSTAND THE THINGS YOU PROFESS?
1

LATER. BE ATTENTIVE. THE STARS ARE NOT FOOLED. THEY REVEAL WHAT YOU HAVE ALWAYS HIDDEN. THEY LIGHT UP YOUR NIGHT. YOU ARE THE SYMBOL OF FERTILITY, AND YOU EMULATE THE FLOWERS OF HAPPINESS AS WELL AS THE POISONED FRUITS OF DESTRUCTION. DON'T—WHATEVER YOU DO—TRUST PLUTO IN YOUR FOURTH HOUSE.

EACH OF US INCARNATES WATER AND FIRE, DRY AND NIGHT, SUN AND SHADOW, VICE AND VIRTUE. NOTHING YOU HAVE SAID SURPRISES ME.

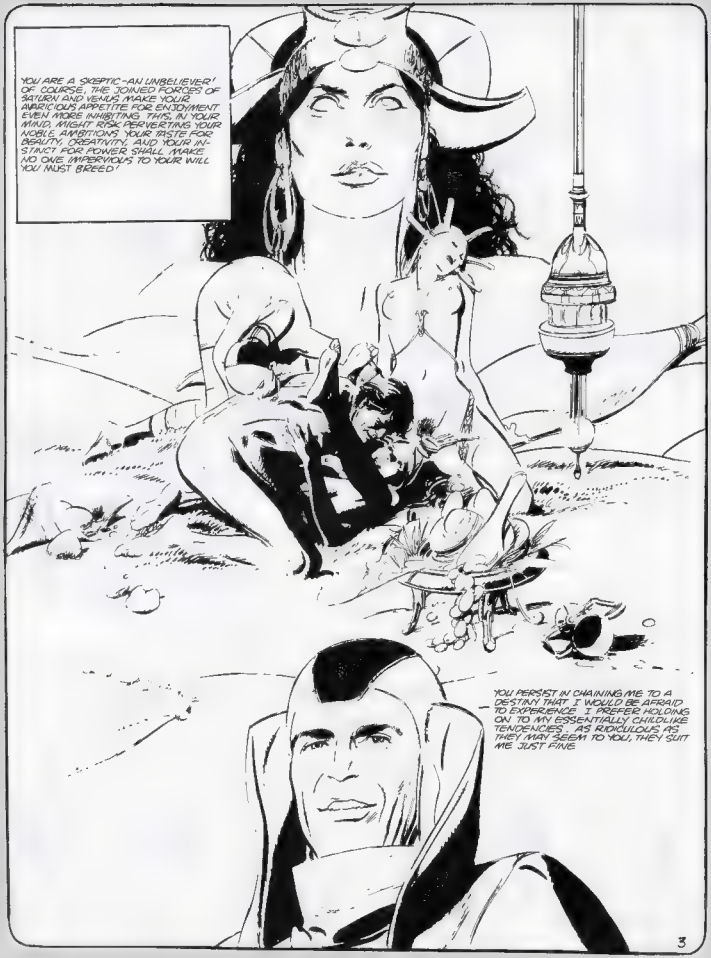
BUT IF YOU WANT, YOU CAN BE THE REDEEMER—THE FERTILIZER. YOU CAN GIVE TERRA BACK ITS BEAUTY. YOU WILL MAKE MEDALLIONS OF PASTORAL HILLS AROUND ITS NECK. YOU WILL MAKE RIVERS AND OCEANS SPRING FROM ITS LOINS." YOU WILL BE THE CONSTRUCTOR.

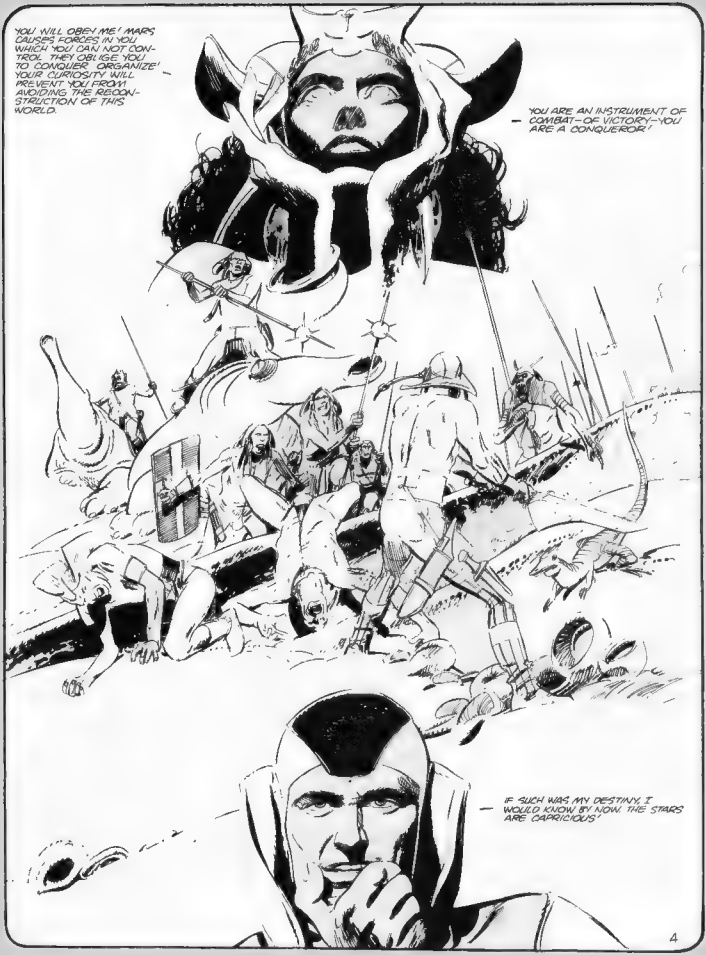
NO KIDDING.' HOWZABOUT THAT.' AIN'T THAT A KICK IN LABONZA?!

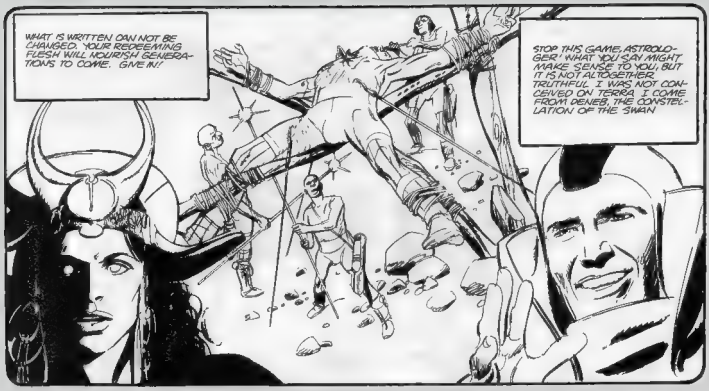


I KNOW. TERRA WAS ENGENDERED. MEN . . . MEN ARE PROLIFIC ON TERRA, BUT THEY ABANDONED IT. LIKE AN OLD MISTRESS. TERRA JUST MISSED EX TERMINATING THE HUMAN RACE.

YOU ARE ENTRUSTING ME WITH A MISSION THAT I HAVE NO DESIRE TO ACCEPT.


YOU ARE A SCEPTIC—AN UNBELIEVER! OF COURSE, THE JOINED FORCES OF SATURN AND VENUS MAKE YOUR AMATEUR APPETITE FOR ENJOYMENT EVEN MORE INHIBITING. THIS, IN YOUR MAID, MIGHT RISK PERVERTING YOUR NOBLE AMBITIONS. YOUR TASTE FOR BEAUTY, CREATIVITY, AND YOUR INSTINCT FOR POWER SHALL MAKE NO ONE IMPERVIOUS TO YOUR WILL. YOU MUST BREED!
YOU PERSIST IN CHAINING ME TO A DESTINY THAT I WOULD BE AFRAID TO EXPERIENCE. I PREFER HOLDING ON TO MY ESSENTIALLY CHILDLIKE TENDENCIES... AS RIDICULOUS AS THEY MAY SEEM TO YOU, THEY SUIT ME JUST FINE.
3


YOU WILL OBEY ME! MARS CAUSES FORCES IN YOU WHICH YOU CAN NOT CONTROL. THEY OBLIGE YOU TO CONQUER. ORGANIZE! YOUR CURIOSITY WILL PREVENT YOU FROM AVOIDING THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THIS WORLD.
YOU ARE AN INSTRUMENT OF COMBAT—OF VICTORY—YOU ARE A CONQUEROR!
IF SUCH WAS MY DESTINY, I WOULD KNOW IT NOW. THE STARS ARE CAPRICIOUS!
4


WHAT IS WRITTEN CAN NOT BE CHANGED. YOUR REBREEDING FLESH WILL NOURISH GENERATIONS TO COME. GIVE IN!
STOP THIS GAME, ASTROLOGER! WHAT YOU SAY MIGHT MAKE SENSE TO YOU, BUT IT IS NOT ALTOGETHER TRUTHFUL. I WAS NOT CONCEIVED ON TERRA. I COME FROM DENEB, THE CONSTELLATION OF THE SWAN.

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT YOUR LITTLE SPEECH WAS SUCH A RELIGIOUS VISIONS THAT IT CAN CROSS THE INTER-STELLAR BOUNDARIES?
I SHOULD HAVE GUESSED! YOU ARE A VISITOR! IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT THE GRANDCHILDREN OF THE CHILDREN OF EXILES RETURN TO US FROM THE STARS!

BUT, HEED WHAT I SAY! ONE CAN NOT ESCAPE COSMOLOGICAL FORCES! THERE ARE OTHERS BESIDES ME WHO KNOW HOW TO READ YOUR FUTURE! THE SKY HAS WOVEN A CURTAIN AROUND YOU, WHERE YOU SHALL ALWAYS BE TRAPPED! IT IS UNRELENTING
WHAT IS UNRELENTING IS THAT THE SUM OF YOUR KNOWLEDGE IS SO MINIMAL - YOUR IGNORANCE IS PRODIGIOUS!

YOU BLASPHEME, STRANGER! GO BACK TO YOUR NIGHT! TURN AWAY FROM THE STARS BEFORE THEY BLIND YOU!
WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO DELUDE YOU BY SAYING THAT YOU HAVE SEEN THE LIGHT, ASTROLOGER?

LATER IN THE PALE NIGHT OF TERRA

INVESTIGATOR OF ZONE 42, CYCLE 13, 23 QUOTIDE. THE FUTURE POPULATION SEEMS TO HAVE PLACED ITS DESTINY IN THE HANDS OF THE ASTROLOGERS. AN ADAMITIC TERROR PUSHES THE SURVIVORS OF THE APOCALYPSE TO SURRENDER BLINDLY TO THE ORACLES. THE LEGEND OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN "LOST IN THE STARS" WAS MOST PROBABLY STARTED BY THE SUPERSTITIOUS. THEIR GUILD DIVERTS THE GREAT PROCESSION OF THE PLANETS IN ORDER TO IMPOSE THEIR UTOPIAN VISIONS ON THE INHABITANTS OF TERRA.
AT CENTRAL COMPUTER. REPORT OF WATCHER MX8934. MEET ON THIS DAY A FOURTH ELEMENT WHICH CONFIRMS THE RETURN OF HUMANS TO TERRA, SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE GALACTIC COLONIES. LITTLE BY LITTLE, THE EXILES, SEEM TO BE TAKING ON THE CHARACTERISTICS ONCE EMBODIED BY THEIR ANCESTORS.
End
6

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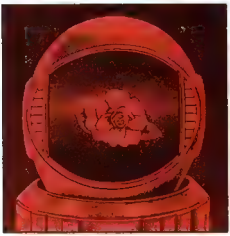
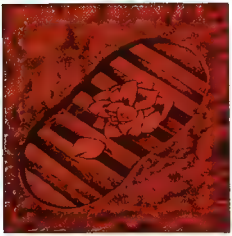
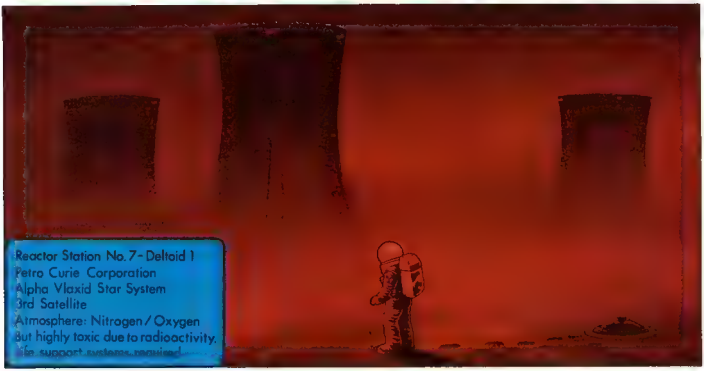
and Robert Ridgeway

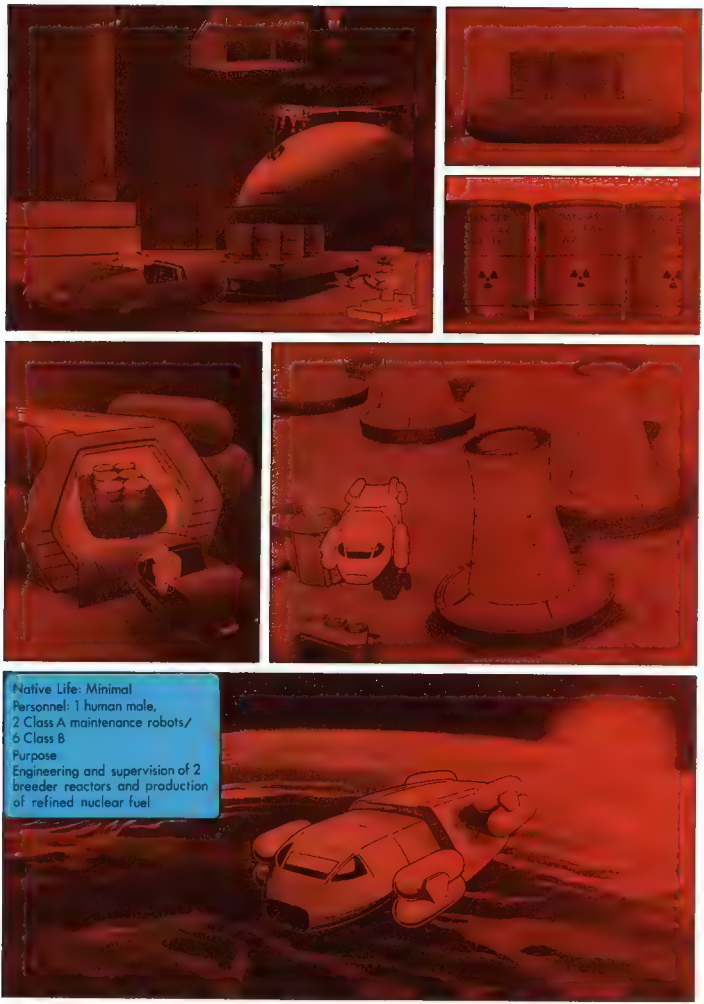
FLUKE O' THE NUKES

© 1983 Jon Alderton






Reactor Station No. 7 - Deltaid 1
Petro Curie Corporation
Alpha Vlaxid Star System
3rd Satellite
Atmosphere: Nitrogen / Oxygen
But highly toxic due to radioactivity.
Life support systems required.

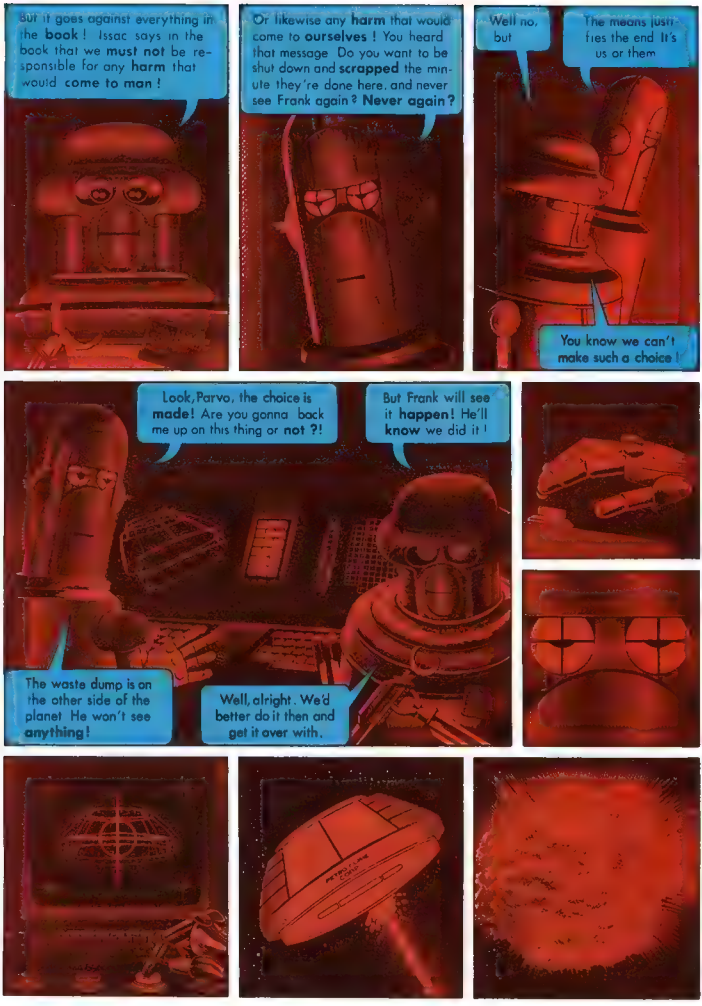

Native Life: Minimal
Personnel: 1 human male,
2 Class A maintenance robots/
6 Class B
Purpose
Engineering and supervision of 2
breeder reactors and production
of refined nuclear fuel

Are you going to make him dinner tonight ?
No, I'm not going to make him dinner It's your turn !
But I made it last night
Yeah, but I took one of your turns last week.
When ?
Last Tuesday. It's in the program log, look.
Alright. I guess I forgot.
I guess you did.
And no pe tonight!

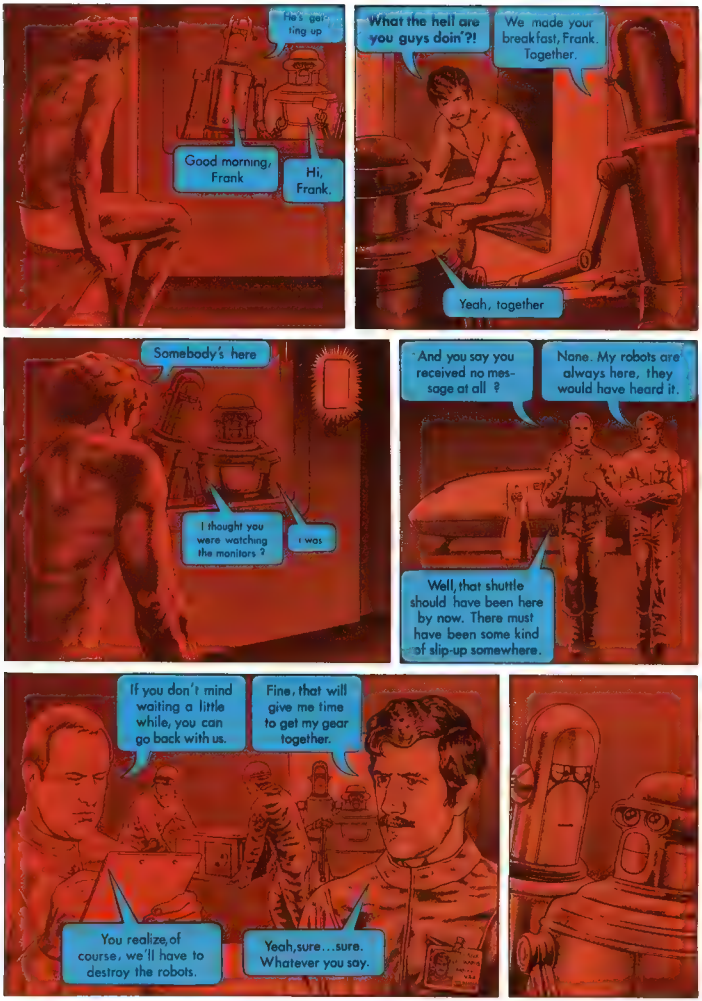
CARBONE.
MEANS MINIMUM
CONTAMINATION
Hey Zefrem, what's cooking?
Peas probably. He knows you hate peas.
You and Parvo still fighting about the cooking?
Not us, Frank
Anything come in on the scanners while I was out?
Not a thing
Well keep your eye on 'em, okay?
Sure thing
I want you two to get done all you can tomorrow at the reactor. There'll be a transport thru here soon enough as it is, so we're all gonna' have to work doubletime 'til then.
Where will you be?
I have to make another dumping run. There's still some waste in unit 1.
Well, what are you two doing?
Waiting for you, Frank.
You know what to do!

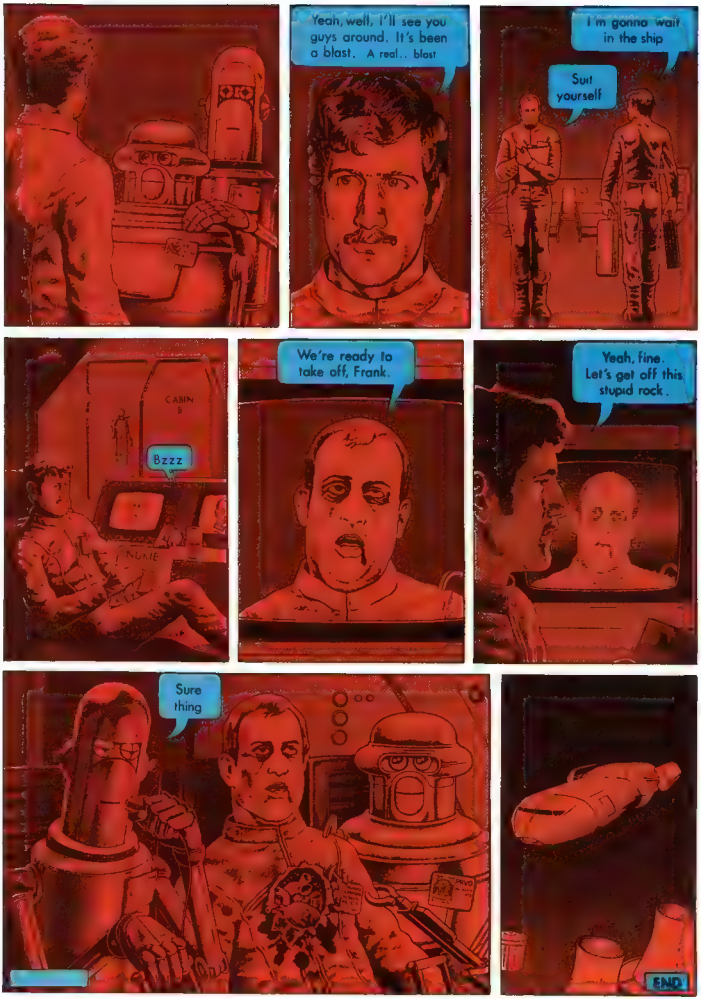
You have to check the calibrations for today's program, Frank. You know that.
Alright, alright. Parvo, go get me some coffee. Zefrem, bring me the calibrations
Don't touch that! This is my side. You go push the buttons on your own side!
But there's a transmission coming thru!
I can see that!
Put it on the tape feed, I'll punch it up.
Deltoid 1, 4-7-9er. This is Petro Curie Base. Executive Board has determined re your immediate transfer per completion this cycle. Data monitors report you have reached maximum toxicity exposure limit, as per health safety regulations. Corporate shuttle to arrive at cycle's end for your departure from Deltoid 1.
Subsequent transport ship to remain for shutdown of all main reactors, airlifting of remaining nuclear fuel, and final disassembly and demolition of all robots. We will resume production as soon as we can find a suitable replacement. See you soon, Frank. Message ends.

Do you know What this means?
A bon voyage party?
That first shuttle will be here any time now
But he said at the **end** of the month!
That message took a month **to get here,** Parvo!
Oh, yeah
We've got to think of something!
What's that blip, Zefrem?
What'll we do?!
We'll have to destroy it!
We can't do that, Zefrem!
We've got to!


But it goes against everything in the book! Issac says in the book that we must not be responsible for any harm that would come to man!
Or likewise any harm that would come to ourselves! You heard that message. Do you want to be shut down and scrapped the minute they're done here, and never see Frank again? Never again?
Well no, but
The means justifies the end. It's us or them
You know we can't make such a choice!
Look, Parvo, the choice is made! Are you gonna back me up on this thing or not?!
But Frank will see it happen! He'll know we did it!
The waste dump is on the other side of the planet. He won't see anything!
Well, alright. We'd better do it then and get it over with.

GOT HIM!
LATER...
Did you substitute all the tapes?
All of them
Stay cool. Follow my lead.
Hi Frank
Hi. Say did you two pick up anything on the monitors today. Any atmospheric disturbances?
Why no, Frank. Why do you ask?
Because something really shook the transport today.
Well you can check today's tapes if you want but I think we monitored everything pretty closely Frank.
Go ahead, Frank, check them all.
That's alright. Whatever it was, it's nothing to lose sleep over. It probably wouldn't show up on any of the monitors anyway, since it's on the other side of the planet.
You can check them if you want, Frank.
Come on, Parvo, I'll help you make dinner!
That's alright, I'm just gonna turn in early.


He's getting up
Good morning, Frank
Hi, Frank.
What the hell are you guys doin'?!
We made your breakfast, Frank. Together.
Yeah, together
Somebody's here
I thought you were watching the monitors ?
I was
And you say you received no message at all ?
None. My robots are always here, they would have heard it.
Well, that shuttle should have been here by now. There must have been some kind of slip-up somewhere.
If you don't mind waiting a little while, you can go back with us.
Fine, that will give me time to get my gear together.
You realize, of course, we'll have to destroy the robots.
Yeah, sure...sure. Whatever you say.

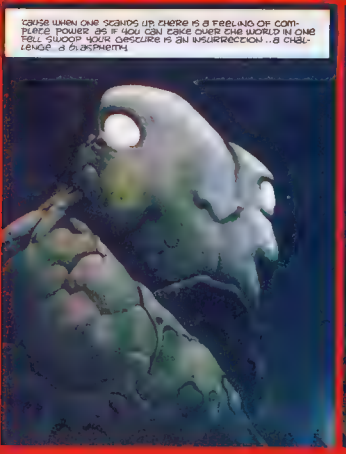

Yeah, well, I'll see you guys around. It's been a blast. A real.. blast
I'm gonna wait in the ship
Suit yourself
CABIN
Bzzz
We're ready to take off, Frank.
Yeah, fine. Let's get off this stupid rock.
Sure thing
END

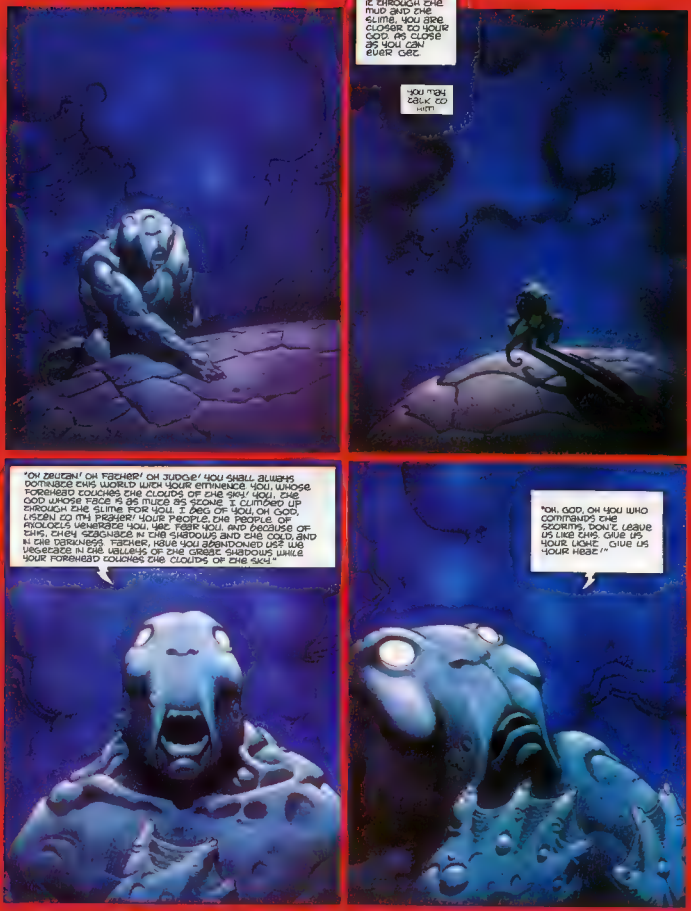
AXOLOTLS

HERE YOU WILL FIND THE SOIL OF THE EARTH-THE SWAMPS ... AN OBSCURE, OPAQUE UNIVERSE. BORDERING A GLOOMY CESSPOOL, WITH FETID MUD. A PLACE OF EXCREMENTAL STENCH... OF ROTTING OOZE. A VIRTUAL MORGUE.
AND THEN THERE ARE ALSO AMBULATORY BODIES. SPINELESS, ALMOST INDIFFERENT. LARVAE. AMORPHOUS BODIES. BE THEY THEY BE DISGUISING... ALWAYS ENSHEATHED IN SOUR LIME... AND STICKY, CONSTANTLY CAKED IN PHLEGM.
OFTEN MISTAKEN FOR TADPOLES, THEIR MOVEMENT CONSISTS OF A SLOW-PACED CRAWL. THEY RESEMBLE AMOEBAE, HEAVY AND SOFT. AWKWARD BLINDS SICKENED BY THE THICK SWAMP SEAWATER.
SUCH ARE THE PEOPLE OF AXOLOTLS
AND ABOVE ZEUZAL, WHOSE BODY HAS BEEN KNOWN TO DISAPPEAR INTO THE FOG OF THE LOWER WORLD, ALL THE WHILE HIS FOREHEAD TOUCHES THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY

AND HERE IS THE MUD OF THE SWAMP ONE CAN STAND UP ON, OH SO GRACEFULLY

AS A MATTER OF FACT, YOU SHOULD STAND UP ZAUZAN DOES


RAISE WHEN ONE STANDS UP THERE IS A FEELING OF COMPLETE POWER AS IF YOU CAN TAKE OVER THE WORLD IN ONE FELL SWOOP YOUR GESTURE IS AN INSURRECTION ..A CHALLENGE ..A BLASPHEMY!


AND IF YOU MAKE IT THROUGH THE MUD AND THE SLIME, YOU ARE CLOSER TO YOUR GOD AS CLOSE AS YOU CAN EVER GET.
YOU MAY TALK TO HIM.
"OH ZEUTAN! OH FATHER! OH JUDGE! YOU SHALL ALWAYS DOMINATE THIS WORLD WITH YOUR EMINENCE. YOU, WHOSE FOREHEAD TOUCHES THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY! YOU, THE GOD WHOSE FACE IS AS MUCH AS STONE. I CLIMBED UP THROUGH THE SLIME FOR YOU. I BEG OF YOU, OH GOD, LISTEN TO MY PRAYER! YOUR PEOPLE, THE PEOPLE OF ARCHOZIS VENERATE YOU. WE FEAR YOU, AND BECAUSE OF THIS, THEY SCORNED IN THE SHADOWS AND THE COLD, AND IN THE DARKNESS. FATHER, HAVE YOU ABANDONED US? WE VENERATE IN THE VALLEYS OF THE GREAT SHADOWS, WHILE YOUR FOREHEAD TOUCHES THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY."
"OH, GOD, OH YOU WHO COMMANDS THE SCORMS, DON'T LEAVE US LIKE THIS. GIVE US YOUR LOVE. GIVE US YOUR HEAT!"

AND THE SKY WHICH IS QUIET

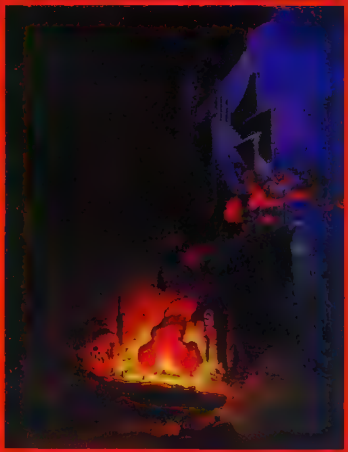
"AT LEAST GIVE US A SIGN!"

AND THE SKY CONTINUES TO BE QUIET

"OH ZEUZA!! YOU ARE A QUIET GOD-MONSTER. SPEAK! YOUR GOD OF INDIFFERENCE SILENCE. NO MATTER. I SHALL CONTINUE TO SPEAK TO YOU!"
"I KNOW I AM ONLY A WORM, OH VULTURE, IN YOUR EYES. I AM ONLY A REJECTED LARVA, OH COPROPHAGOUS JACKAL, IN THE PESTILENCE OF YOUR MIND. I AM ONLY A VERMIN WHICH GROVELS, OH CELESTIAL HOG, IN YOUR OFFAL."

"BUT I DON'T FEAR YOU, OH FLY-SPECK OF THE SKY! I AM NOT GOING TO BEG YOU ANYMORE I NO LONGER HAVE THE TIME. OH RACID DEFECTION OF CHAOS. IF I EVER HAPPEN TO BE BEYOND THE SWAMPS FOR MORE THAN A SHORT WHILE, I SHALL MAKE A DENT TO YOUR FOREHEAD TO ERASE YOUR FACE!!! AND I SHALL ERASE YOUR NAME FROM OUR PEOPLE'S MINDS AND SCREAM OUT MINE!"

PROMEZ!



HERE YOU HAVE FALLEN DOWN AGAIN TOWARDS THE WATERS BELOW TOWARDS YOUR PEOPLE, THE PEOPLE OF AXOLOTLS AND YOUR FALL IS ALREADY AN ILLUM NATION
AND YOU FELL LIKE A BOLT OF LIGHTNING AND THE FLAME CONSUMES YOUR BACTERIAL SKIN. OH, WHAT A MYSTERY METAMORPHOSIS IS. UNDER THE FIRE UNDER THE PAIN THE MOLTING' UNDER THE DEAD ASH OF YOUR SKIN, THE GOLD EMBERS FINALLY REVEAL NEW SCALES
OH, THANK YOU, FATHER!
DON'T LOOK BACK! YOU MUST NEVER LOOK BACK!
ALREADY THE SWAMPS ARE BURNING! ALREADY THE SKINS OF THOSE YOU ONCE WATCHED OVER ARE BURNING AND THE NAME OF AXOLOTLS--SHALL THAT BURN, TOO?

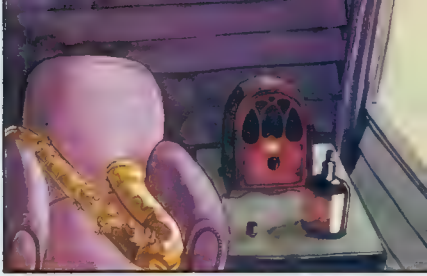
YES, FOR THE NEW PEOPLE WHO WALK IN THE NAME OF FIRE SHALL HAVE A NEW NAME: SALAMANDERS
AND YOU WHO CARRY THE LIGHT, YOU SHALL WEAR YOUR NAME WITH PRIDE BEHOLD LUCIFER!
ART AND STORY - CAZA

THE NIGHT OF THE ALLIGATOR

by LOUSTAL

THE RADIO HAD SAID NAT GONNA STORM AND SO IT DID, PLUNDERING MY BIT OF THE COAST TEARING THE PALM TREES TO SHREDS AND FORCING THE LIGHTS TO GO ON AND OFF LIKE A CHRISMAS TREE. IT DIDN'T REALLY BOTHER ME, FOR MY FINGERS KNEW ALL TOO WELL THE LOCATION OF THE KEYS ANYWAY WHO NEEDS THE LIGHTS WHEN YOU JUST WANT TO SIT DOWN AND DRINK SO I SAT UNTIL I HEARD A FAINT KNOCK AT THE DOOR I THOUGHT IT WAS THE WIND AND I IGNORED IT UNTIL

I SAW HIM. I GUESS HE COULD HAVE BEEN A KID LOST IN THE STORM BUT WHEN HE RAISED HIS HEAD, THE LIGHT WASN'T FED HIS EYES AND I KNEW THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO

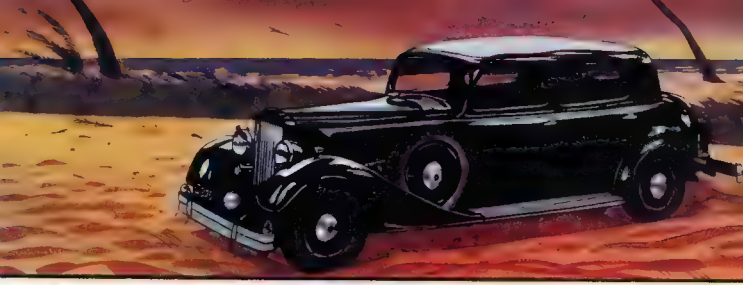


HE SAID "COME ON DOC." WITH A SHRILL VOICE THAT SENT MY HEART SCARING THROUGH MY CHEST. I DON'T KNOW WHY I REACTED THAT WAY IT'S SORT OF COMMON FOR PEOPLE TO COME TO MY PLACE NEEDING ASSISTANCE OF SOME KIND BUT THIS GUY GAVE ME THE WILLIES I TOLD HIM I DIDN'T HAVE THE TIME

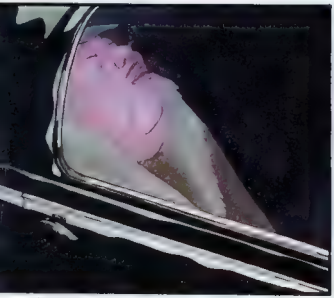
THE WATER DRIPPING FROM HIS HAT STREAKED HIS FACE. HE LOOKED AT ME AND CONTINUED TO DO SO FOR A LONG TIME. HE LAST HE CONVINCED ME TO GO WITH HIM— WITHOUT EVEN SAYING A WORD

THEY COME FROM AS FAR AWAY AS NEW ORLEANS TO HAVE AN ABORTION DONE BY DOC. EVEN WOMEN OF THE WORLD BUT THIS WAS DIFFERENT. I'D ONLY REGRETTED MY INABILITY TO STICK WITH MY ORIGINAL DECISION BUT I GUESS THE CHOICE WAS NOT MINE

I CAME FROM THE CITY. NO ONE WEARS THOSE KIND OF CLOTHES AROUND HERE. NO NEED TO TRY AND EXPLAIN TO HIM THAT THESE THINGS CAN WAIT UNTIL THE END OF THE "STORM" OUR FEET BARELY PENETRATED THE WET SAND



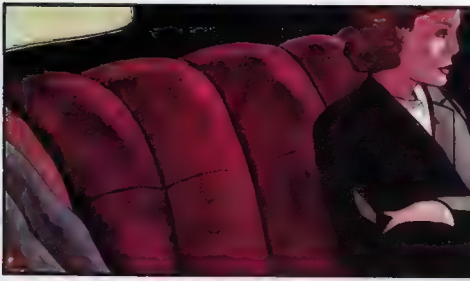
THE CAR WAS PARKED A FEW YARDS AWAY FROM THE ROAD. IT WAS LONG AND SLEEK—ANOTHER MANIFESTATION OF AMERICAN GENIUS. THE WIND BLEW LIKE A BRASS SECTION, BUT THE CAR WOULD NOT TREMBLE. AND ME? WELL, YES. I TREMBLED. I WAS DRUNK AS A SAILOR AND SCARED SHITLESS



UNDOUBTEDLY THE LITTLE MAN HAD TO PERCH ON A CUSHION IN ORDER TO DRIVE THE ENORMOUS MACHINE. BUT THEN, THAT MUST HAVE BROUGHT HIS LITTLE FEET EVEN FARTHER FROM THE PEDALS! WHO CARES?

LEATHER, WET SILK, A TWO-BUCK CIGAR, AND—OH, YES—A PERFUME A BIT TOO FEMININE FOR HIM. THE WIND BLEW ALL OF THESE SCENTS INTO MY FACE. HE WAS SO PALE HE COULD HAVE BEEN DEAD LEGALLY. HE PROBABLY WAS

BUT HE MOVED AND HIS HAND TOUCHED HIS FUR. STRONG AND WHITE, HIS BLOODY HAND BOASTED DIAMONDS. THE GIRL SITTING NEXT TO HIM SAID, "CLOSE THAT DOOR, YOU IDIOT!" AND SO I DID!



I WOULD HAVE BEEN INCAPABLE OF DOING IT HAD SHE NOT LOOKED SO MUCH LIKE DAISY. THE TIGHT FACE. HER SMALL MOUTH. I ALMOST SCREAMED OUT HER NAME WHEN I SAW HER. BUT I KNEW IT WASN'T REALLY DAISY, SO WHAT WAS THE USE? DAISY WAS SUDDENLY VERY VIVID IN MY MEMORY.

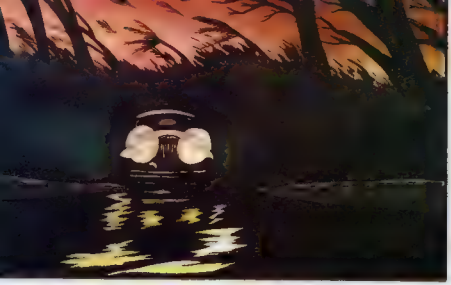
IN THE CITY, WHERE THE WIND PUSHES THE SNOWFLAKES ALONG THE STREETS, YOU DARE NOT MAKE A FALSE MOVE. OR YOU'RE A GONER. THE STREETS WERE...WED WITH MEN IN BLUE COATS WHO WERE PROGRAMMED TO SHOOT AT THE DROP OF A HAT. A FEDORA, OF COURSE. THEIR POCKETS ARE FILLED WITH MONEY. THEIR HEARTS MUST BE LINED WITH LEAD.

THE D. TARGETS RECEIVED THE KISS OF DEATH, BUT WERE SURELY UNAWARE OF ITS SIGNIFICANCE. BANG! THE HITMEN WOULD PULL OUT THE LEAD, PLUCK THE BUNCHES, AND LEAVE THE CARCASS FOR SOME OTHERE POOR SLOB. THIS WAS THEIR WORK AND THEY DID IT WELL.... ALL TOO WELL.

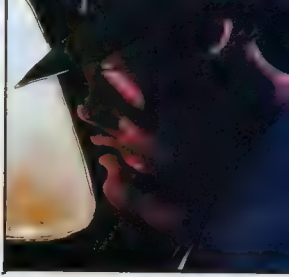
DAISY WAS MY PRIDE AND JOY. I SWEAR THAT I LOVED HER MOTHER WHEN WE USED TO SAIL THE SKIFF ON THE LAKE - BUT LOVE IS ONE KIND OF BIRD THAT CAN'T BE PUT IN A CAGE.

DO YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO PAY THE PIPER? AND WHO FIXES THE PRICE? I'VE SEEN SAINTS DIE IN THEIR HOSPITAL BEDS!

OR WAS IT ONLY A BIT OF CHANCE THAT SHOT THROUGH THE WOOD, THE COTTON, AND THE SKIN ONLY TO END UP EMBEDDED IN THE PLASTER WALL? ALL TOO CONVENIENT FOR A COP TO FIND JUST BY CLEVERLY WIELDING A PEN-KNIFE.



AH I WAS THERE ON THE EDGE OF M PS BURT RALSH GUDGE KE AMNKEY BUT SHE CONTINUED TO LOOK OUT THE WINDOW AND I D DN T DARE ASK HER NAME.



THE FAT MAN UNHOOKED HIS TEETH FROM HIS LOWER LIP AND AS HE MUMBLED SOMETHING ABOUT THE BUMPY ROAD, HE ASKED FOR A DRINK. HE REALLY DID NEED A GOOD DOCTOR

THE BURNING OF A BUNK OF A HAIR TREE CLOSELY BE HEAR U THE K D JUMPED AND THRUST HIS HAND N HIS HOLSTER BUT TRIED TO REMAIN CALM HIS HAT DIDN T FL NOH FROM HIS HEAD T WAS ALMOST AS IF IT HAD BEEN SCREWED ON

WHEN I AWOKE AM T TO BE SOME WATER N THE A T THEN, HE WOULDN T BUDGE AN NCH HIS BURNING GAZE WENT BACK AND FORTH FROM THE WOUND TO ME BACK AND FORTH THE CIGAR-ETTE ASHES FELL ON HIS LAPEL

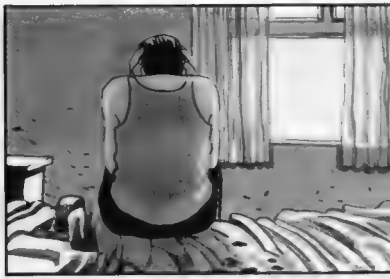
"THERE YOU ARE, DOC," SHE SAID IN A STONE COLD VOICE. "YOU HAVE TWO LIVES TO SAVE." I COULD'VE SWORN SHE WAS DAISY I WENT INTO THE KITCHEN

AT THE TIME OF HER MOTHER'S DEATH, I HAD BEEN DOING A LOT OF "EXCAVATION" WORK. NO ONE CAME TO THE FUNERAL SAVE DAISY AND MYSELF. WE STOOD WITH OUR FROZEN FINGERS INTERTWINED.

WHEN WE RETURNED HOME, DAISY TOOK OFF HER BLACK DRESS AND WENT TO BED. I SAT ALONE AND GOT VERY DRUNK.

AND THEN I GOT INTO BED AND WE CRIED SOME MORE. MY BEARD LEFT A RED MARK ON HER PALE SHOULDER. SHE SOBBED SO STRONGLY THAT OUR TWO BODIES TREMBLED.

I FLED TO THIS TOWN BECAUSE OF WHAT I DID THAT NIGHT. I HOPED, FOOLISHLY, THAT I WOULD FORGET THE ABOMINABLE THING I DID. BUT FOOLISH IT WAS.



WHEN I AWOKE THE NEXT MORNING, MY HEAD WAS IN AN EARLIER AND NOW EVERY NIGHT BEFORE I GO TO BED I GET PLASTERED. I THINK OF THAT HORRIBLE EVENT IT HAS BEEN LIKE A RUSTY SAW SLOWLY CUTTING ME IN TWO. MY HEAD DEFIES THE MEMORY OF MY SHAME.

THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE I COULD DO BUT WAIT. HE MUST HAVE BEEN HER TV AT ONE TIME, BUT LYING THERE WITHOUT HIS HELL-CAT SUIT, HE WAS NO MORE THAN A HEAP OF SOFT, WHITE MEAT WITH A HOLE IN IT

SECRETLY, I WISHED I COULD CHANGE PLACES WITH HIM. JUST TO FEEL THE MORPHINE FLOW THROUGH MY BLOOD AND ALLOW ME TO DRIFT INTO ABANDON THE GIRL HAD LEFT. BUT WHEN?

MY BOTTLE WAS THERE, BUT A LITTLE LESS FULL WHEN I BROUGHT IT TO MY MOUTH, I TASTED THE FLAVOR OF HER LIPSTICK.

THE STORM HAD LIFTED. BEHIND US, THE TREES CONTINUED TO BLEED. FATIGUE FLOWED THROUGH MY VEINS. I WONDERED IF SHE HAD SLEPT AT ALL

THE SUN WAS GOING TO BURN HER CITY KID'S SKIN. I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING, THOUGH. WHEN SHE NEEDS A DOCTOR, I'LL BE THERE TO PASS HER THE OINTMENT. (WHEN WE CAME BACK FROM THE LAKE AT THE END OF EACH SUMMER, DAISY'S NOSE WAS ALWAYS RED.

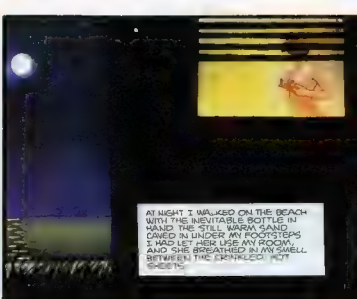
THE DAYS WENT BY AND I FOUND OUT THAT THE GIRL'S NAME WAS CLARA. THE KID'S NAME WAS BUTCH. THEY CALLED THE WOUNDED MAN DIAMONDS. THERE WAS NO MENTION OF ANY OF THEM ON THE RADIO, NOT THAT WE LISTENED TO IT MUCH, ANYWAY. BUTCH HATED SWING, AND HE HAD FORBIDDEN ME TO PLAY MY SAX.

WHEN THEY WANTED ME, BUTCH WOULD STAND BEHIND ME WITH HIS MACHINE GUN. HE NEVER PREVENTED ME FROM LEAVING, BUT HE NEVER LET ANYONE ELSE COME INTO THE HOUSE

I RETURNED WITH EVERYTHING I NEEDED TO SURVIVE: ALCOHOL AND CIGARETTES. I MANAGED TO MEET CLARA WHEN THE HOURS WERE HOT AND EMPTY, MOST OF THE TIME SHE WAS DRUNK AND HER NOSE WAS RED.

TIME PASSED SLOWLY. I LET MY FINGERS RUN DOWN THE KEYS OF THE SAX AND LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW AT THE CARGO BOATS COMING BACK FROM CUBA. I DREAMED OF ADVENTURE AND BLONDE WOMEN.

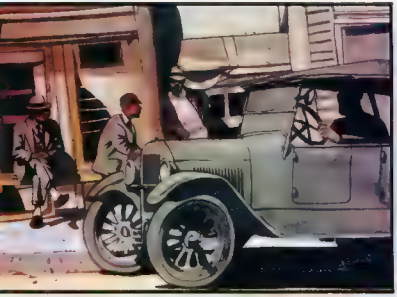
SOMETIMES, BUT NOT TOO OFTEN, A BREATH OF WIND RUSTLED THE TOP OF THE PALM TREES, BUT WITHIN SECONDS ALL WOULD TURN IMMOBILE ONCE AGAIN. BUTCH, PERSPIRED AND CLARA, WOULD TREAD AROUND BAREFOOT, NOT MAKING ANY NOISE



AT NIGHT I WALKED ON THE BEACH WITH THE INEVITABLE BOTTLE IN HAND. THE STILL WARM SAND CAVED IN UNDER MY FOOTSTEPS. I HAD LET HER USE MY ROOM, AND SHE BREATHED IN MY SMELL BETWEEN THE SPRINKLED, HOT SHEETS.

EVERY TUESDAY, I SPRINKLED MYSELF WITH BLUE LOTION, AND WENT THROUGH THE LITTLE CITY, FURIOUSLY GRINDING MY GEAR SHIFT ALL THE WAY. I LOVED BOTHERING THE TOWN ASSHOLES, INEVITABLY WAKING THEM FROM THEIR PEACEFUL SIESTAS. IF I WASN'T AT PEACE, WHY SHOULD THEY BE?

IT WAS WHEN THE BLACKTOP WAS REPLACED BY YELLOW DUST THAT I NOTICED THEM. A CAR OF THE YEAR, AND THE WHITES OF TWO HATS IN THE BACK SEAT.



THEY WERE THERE, MELTING INTO THE SHADOWS OF THE PORCHES. I COULD PRACTICALLY SEE THE WHITES OF THEIR EYES SLIP BETWEEN THEIR EYELIDS WHEN I WENT BY. THE WATER BOILED IN THE RADIATOR, AND MY SHIRT CLUNG TO MY BACK LIKE A CHILD TO ITS MAMA.

SHE NEVER SPOKE TO ME. SHE CONTINUED TO ROCK IN HER CHAIR AND PERHAPS HER FAT MOUTH WAS PURSED A LITTLE WHEN I BRUSHED BY IT TO GO IN.

HER HOUSE SMELLED OF COLD PORK, ALL THE WHILE PLAINTIVE MUSIC FILTERED THROUGH THE WALLS. MARY LOU WAS LESS AFRAID OF ME NOW, ALTHOUGH I SENSED SHE WAS STILL UNCOMFORTABLE.

WHEN I BEGAN TO KISS HER MARY LOU WOULD TRY TO TURN AWAY. BUT AFTER A MOMENT OR TWO SHE STIFFENED AND CLAWED MY BACK. AND HER BODY WOULD SUDDENLY EXHALE A WILD ODOR.

WHEN I CAME BACK FROM OWN THAT TUESDAY AFTERNOON, THE SMELL OF MARY LOU CLUNG TO MY SKIN AND MIXED WITH THE SMELL OF BLUE LOTION. I LIKED VISITING HER EVERY SO OFTEN AND ALWAYS FELT MORE AT PEACE WITH MYSELF ONCE I DID. BUT IT WAS ON THAT DAY, THAT TWO KILLERS..PERSISTED ON FOLLOWING ME IN THEIR BEAUTIFUL NEW CAR I TOOK THE BAYOU ROAD

THE FIRST TIME I MET LAVIN, HE WAS CARRYING ONE OF HIS SONS WHO HAD JUST BEEN BITTEN BY A MOCASSIN SNAKE. HE LEANED HIS GUN AGAINST MY STOMACH - LAVIN HAD PALE EYES AND A CAJUN ACCENT

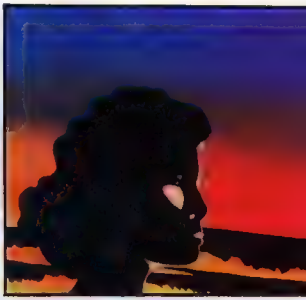
WE REMAINED SEATED, FACE TO FACE FOR ONE WHOLE DAY, WAITING FOR HIS SON TO COME OUT OF A COMA. THERE WAS NO DOUBT IN MIND THAT IF HE DIDN'T RECOVER, I WAS GOING TO BE THE NEXT TO GO. LAVIN DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING, JUST STARED AT ME, AND GROUND HIS CHAIR

WHEN WE DISCUSSED MONEY WE GROANED. THE SUN WAS HITTING US HARD, AND FROM TIME TO TIME, WE COULD HEAR SOMETHING RUSTLE IN THE SWAMPS.

AFTER HIS SON WAS HEALED, LAVIN GAVE ME HALF AN HOUR TO LEAVE THE PREMISES. HE LEFT ME, GOING DEEPER INTO THE FOREST WITH HIS SONS

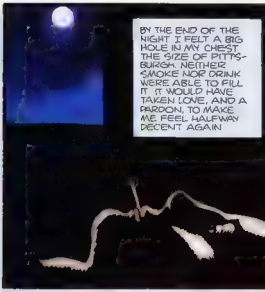
THAT NIGHT WAS THE FIFTH AND MOST STIFLING. CLARA AND I LISTENED TO THE RADIO AND EMPTIED A BOTTLE OF SOUR MASH. WHEN I GOT UP TO LOOK FOR ANOTHER IN THE BASIN, BUTCH SAID WITHOUT TURNING AROUND, "CAREFUL, DOC. YOU AND ME HAVE SOMETHING TO DO TOMORROW."

USUALLY, BUTCH LEFT HIS HOLSTER SLUNG OVER THE BACK OF HIS CHAIR. I COULD HAVE GOTTEN IT ANY NUMBER OF TIMES. BUT THEN, WHAT WOULD I HAVE DONE WITH CLARA?

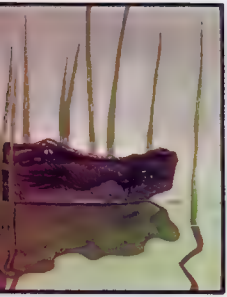


AT FIRST I THOUGHT I WAS THE WIND. BUT THERE WAS NONE. IT WAS THE PATTER OF HER BARE FEET IN THE SAND. IT WAS JUST LIKE THE GENTLE FLAPPING OF A BIRD'S WINGS.

SHE WALKED ACROSS THE BEACH AND WENT INTO THE SILVER WATER. THE FEELING OF TROUBLE SHOT THROUGH ME, LIKE THE MEMORY OF A VERY OLD WOUND.


BY THE END OF THE NIGHT I FELT A BIG HOLE IN MY CHEST. THE SIZE OF PITTSBURGH. NEITHER SMOKE NOR DRINK WERE ABLE TO FILL IT. IT WOULD HAVE TAKEN LOVE, AND A PARDON, TO MAKE ME FEEL HALFWAY DECENT AGAIN.

THE FOG CLUNG TO MY FACE. IT WAS WET AND COLD. ONLY THE NOISE OF THE PADDLES, THE SILKY TEARING OF THE WATER, COULD BE HEARD. I WAS SITTING IN THE BACK. MY EYES HURT AND MY MOUTH WAS DUSTY. I REGRETTED NOT HAVING BROUGHT A BOTTLE. AND THEN I SAW THEM, AT THE END OF THE LAKE, AND I STOPPED BREATHING.



THEY HAD SEEN US, TOO, AND BEGAN TO SCREAM. THEY WERE LIKE TWO POOR CROWS NAILED TO THE DOOR OF A BARN.

THEIR EYES WERE BLACK HOLES IN THEIR LIVID FACES. THEIR HANDS WERE SWOLLEN, READY TO BURST. THE MORE THEY TRIED TO GET FREE, THE MORE THEY TWIRLED 'ROUND AND 'ROUND IN THE AIR. FOR ONE WHOLE NIGHT THEY HAD DANCED IN THAT WAY, AND HAD SCREAMED IN HOLY TERROR AS THE WATER BENEATH THEM RIPPLED.

BUTCH'S SHOULDERS STRETCHED THE MATERIAL OF HIS JACKET AS HIS WHOLE BODY BENT FORWARDS, AND TREMBLED WITH IMPATIENCE. HIS BITTER MOUTH ABUSED THEM.

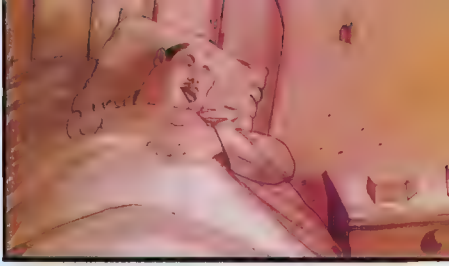
WHEN BUTCH STOOD UP, ONE OF THE MEN TRIED TO SPIT IN HIS FACE, BUT HIS MOUTH WAS TOO DRY. BUTCH SLASHED THEIR HANDS AND FACE, AND CHUCKLED SLIGHTLY, AS HE CUT THEM DOWN, SENDING THEM BOBBING IN THE CURRENT.

I PROBABLY SHOULD HAVE CLOSED MY EYES AND PUT MY HANDS AGAINST MY EARS, BUT I LOOKED AND LISTENED UNTIL THEIR END. PRINTING BEHIND MY EYELIDS AN INEXHAUSTIBLE MOSAIC OF NIGHTMARES FOR MANY NIGHTS TO COME. A FEW DROPS SPLASHED MY FACE AND HANDS, AND I DIDN'T NEED TO LOWER MY EYES TO KNOW WHAT COLOR THEY WERE.

THE FOG LIFTED. A SNAKE SLID ON THE SURFACE OF THE WATER WHILE BIRDS CRIED OUT IN THEIR BRANCHES.

SEATED IN FRONT, BUTCH CLOSED HIS KNIFE AND LOOKED AT ME WITHOUT REALLY SEEING ME. A STRANGE EXPRESSION APPEARED ON HIS FACE. THAT'S WHEN I DECIDED TO KILL HIM.

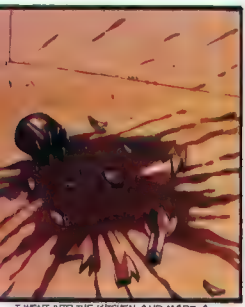
I RAN UPSTAIRS AND PLACED THE NECK OF A BOTTLE SQUARELY BETWEEN MY TEETH. MY KNEES TREMBLED SO STRONGLY THAT I HAD TO STRETCH OUT ON MY BED—ALL THE WHILE SMELLING CLARA'S SCENT AROUND ME.



SOMETIMES DIAMONDS OPENED HIS EYES AND LOOKED AT ME. WHEN HE MOVED HIS HAUCS, THE STONES SPARKLED. ON THAT DAY, WEDNESDAY, HE SLEPT PEACEFULLY AND HIS BREATH FILLED THE ROOM.

THE HOUSE WAS SILENT. I HAD A DISGUSTING TASTE IN MY MOUTH, ALMOST AS IF I HAD DRUNK EVERY LAST DROP OF THE SWAMP WATER.

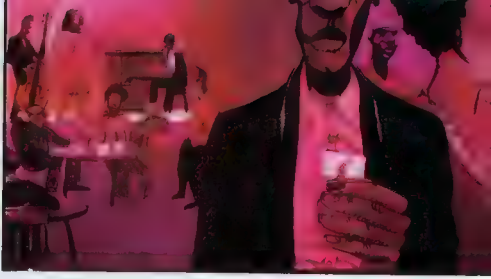
ABSURDLY, I COULD THINK OF NOTHING ELSE BUT THE MARK THE TABLE WOULD LEAVE ON THE UPPER PART OF HER THIGH. THEY MOANED AND BREATHED IN SILENCE, THEIR SOLES SCRAPING THE FLOOR. I QUIETLY CLOSED THE DOOR.



I WENT INTO THE KITCHEN AND MADE A LITTLE MORE NOISE THAN I HAD INTENDED. MY TREMBLING FINGERS COST ME A WHOLE BOTTLE.

WHEN I OPENED THE DOOR AGAIN, MY HEART JUMPED IN MY THROAT. CLARA DIDN'T HAVE TO MOVE HER HEAD TO SEE ME—SHE WAS WAITING FOR ME. HER GLAZED EXPRESSION WAS DEVIOUS. I THOUGHT OF THE MARK ON HER THIGH, OF HER STOMACH FURTIVELY WIPED AND DRIED.

I SPENT THE NEXT TWO DAYS IN THE CITY MY HANDS CLUNG TO THE STEERING WHEEL AND I FOLLOWED THE MOON SUSPENDED ABOVE THE ROAD



THEY CALLED THIS PLACE THE BARN--THAT'S ALL. THE BARN. YOU NEVER KNEW IF THEY'D BE OPEN THE NEXT TIME YOU WENT BY. IT WAS ALL UP TO THE SHERIFF

ARCHIE, THE PROPRIETOR, LIKED ME A LOT. HE WAS A GIANT WITH A SWEET, YET FEROCIOUS, SMILE. HE KNEW I WAS INTO THE BLUES AND HE BOUGHT ME A DRINK EVERY SO OFTEN. YEAH, ARCHIE LIKED ME A LOT.

ALONG WITH BLUES, I NEEDED MY SECOND MOST EFFECTIVE REMEDY. THE BARTENDER SUPPLIED THE SHOCK TREATMENT

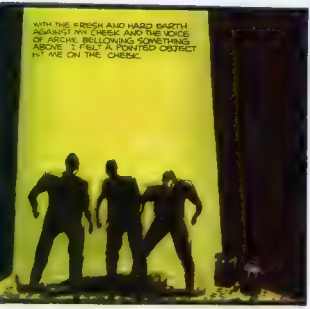
I HAD NEVER PLAYED LIKE THAT BEFORE. THAT NIGHT, MY FINGERS FLEW OVER THE KEYS AS I EMPTIED MY SOUL OF ALL THE FILTH AND SADNESS WHICH LAY STAGNANT THERE. NO ONE ACTUALLY KNEW WHERE THE MUSIC WAS COMING FROM. BUT I SENSED THEY UNDERSTOOD EVERY NOTE I WAS PLAYING

MARY LOU WAS THERE, BUT SHE IGNORED ME. SUDDENLY I WANTED HER. HER SMELL. HER TIGHT STOMACH. MY FOOT CAUGHT HOLD OF A CHAIR, AND I JUST MISSED FALLING. WHISKEY SOAKED MY SHIRT AND THEN MY PANTS.

MARY LOU LOOKED ELSEWHERE. I SHOUTED AND FANNED MONEY IN HER FACE, BUT IT WAS IN VAIN. SHE CONTINUED TO LOOK ELSEWHERE.

AFTER THAT'S WELL, I NO LONGER REMEMBER IT VERY WELL. THERE WERE SCREAMS AND MOVEMENT. BUT IT IS ALL A HAZY BLUR. SO MUCH PERFUME AND SWEAT MADE ME SICK, AND I CALLED OUT FOR MARY LOU OR WAS IT CLARA?

WITH THE DULL HAMMERING OF THE DOUBLE BASS ON MY TEMPLES AND THE HUNDREDS OF FINGERS CRUSHING MY FLESH, I VOMITED ON TWO OR THREE SHOES.


WITH THE FRESH AND HARD EARTH AGAINST MY CHEEK AND THE VOICE OF ARCHIE BELLOWING SOMETHING ABOVE. I FELT A POINTED OBJECT ON ME ON THE CHEEK.

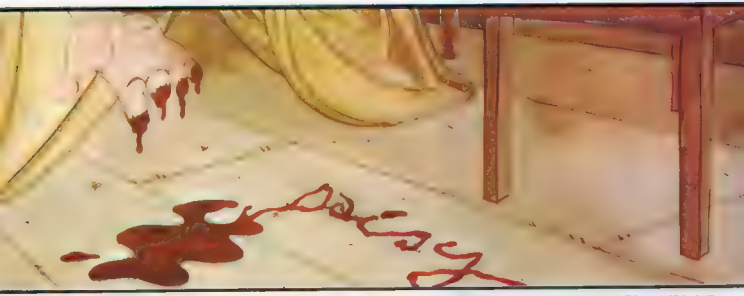
THE NIGHT WAS PALING WHEN I WOKE UP. MY HANDS WERE LIKE PUTTY AND THE SWEAT TRICKLED DOWN MY THIGHS. IT WAS BITTER COLD. SOMEONE HAD TAKEN THE TROUBLE TO PUT MY SAX ON THE BENCH IN FRONT— THANKS, ARCHIE

I RETURNED HOME. THE HEAT WAS MAKING THE AIR CRACK. I STOPPED TO SLEEP AT THE SIDE OF THE ROAD, AND THEN ONCE AGAIN IN A BAR. THE BLACK CAR WAS NO LONGER THERE.

IT FELT LIKE I WAS ENTERING A HOUSE THAT HAD BEEN ABANDONED FOR ONE HUNDRED YEARS. HER PERFUME LINGERED IN THE LIVING ROOM AS MY HEART BEGAN TO BEAT PAINFULLY IN MY CHEST.

SO MANY THINGS HAVE HAPPENED IN THE LAST WEEK THAT NOTHING WOULD SURPRISE ME ANYMORE. AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT.

DIAMONDS LOOKED AT ME IN THE SAME WAY ALL DEAD PEOPLE LOOK AT YOU-- THEY'RE STARING, BUT THEY DON'T SEE A DAMN THING. THE FLIES SWARMED AROUND HIM, FLOUNDERING IN HIS BLACK BLOOD. THE SMELL OF DEATH HAD INVADED THE ROOM.



BUT THAT WASN'T THE SURPRISE. NO, IT WAS THE NAME SCRIBBLED THERE, ON THE FLOOR BESIDE HIM. I FELL ON MY KNEES AND BROUGHT MY EYES CLOSER, BUT IT STILL SAID THE SAME THING. AND NOT IN LIPSTICK.

WHEN THE NIGHT IS BLACK. I'LL GO AND FEED THE ALLIGATORS. THE BLOOD IN MY VEINS WAS BEGINNING TO FLOW AGAIN. AFTER THAT, I'LL COME BACK, GET DRUNK, AND PLAY THE SAX.

THE END

WE HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR THE GREAT PHALIX FOR OVER TWO WEEKS NOW. I THINK IT'S TIME TO GIVE UP. IT'S TOO BAD, THOUGH... WE COULD HAVE REALLY USED THE REWARD
LET'S NOT GIVE UP SO EASILY, TOBOR. I JUST SAW SOMETHING DOWN IN THAT VALLEY.
HOLD ON, PINKY! I'M LANDING!
I COULD HAVE SWORN IT WAS A SPACESHIP... MAYBE IT'S A WRECK!

PINKY WARNER AND THE VIRGIN SEEKERS!

by VOSS

LOOK! ANOTHER SHIP!
IT'S THE CRUISECRAFT OF THE GREAT PHALIX! HE MIGHT BE HURT IN THERE, OR EVEN DEAD.
IT'S EMPTY!
Pinky
WELL, IF HE ISN'T ON BOARD, HE MUST HAVE SURVIVED THE LANDING. I'LL EXPLORE THE SURROUNDINGS. YOU WATCH OVER THE SHIP!
OKAY, BOSS!

WHO'S THAT?
HEY! WHAT IS THIS?
NOOOOOO!

I FEEL LIKE I'VE BEEN REBORN!
WELCOME TO OUR HUMBLE PLANET, AKKA.
THE SUPREME KHADOUR IS IMATIENT TO SEE YOU AGAIN, AKKA.
WE HAD SEARCHED THROUGHOUT SPACE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS BEFORE WE FOUND THIS PLANET. IT IS PERFECT FOR RECREATING THE SPLENDORS OF OUR CIVILIZATION.
?!
PAF!
4

DON'T TOUCH ME!
ALERT! GET YOUR WEAPONS!
OOOOOOH!
WHAT HAPPENED?
YOU WERE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THAT PARASITE!
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!
WE CAN'T GO UNTIL WE FIND THE GREAT PHALIX. I'M SURE HE'S AROUND HERE!
WE COULD GO TO THE SHIP AND CONTACT CENTRAL CONTROL. THEY'D SEND REINFORCEMENTS IMMEDIATELY, BUT THOSE CREATURES WILL NEVER LET US OUT OF HERE!
I KNOW ANOTHER WAY. FOLLOW ME!

HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS PLACE SO WELL?
IT MUST HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THAT BRAINWASHING CAP. A LITTLE PART OF ME FEELS AS IF I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE.
IT'S A VERY STRANGE FEELING.
DON'T MOVE!
!?
THERE'S NO ONE NEAR THE SHIP!
LET'S GO!

XIRAK HAS INTERCEPTED THE FEMALE AND THE ROBOT AND HAS DESTROYED THEIR SHIP. AS SOON AS THEY'RE ON BOARD, WE CAN PROCEED.
VERY GOOD, SUPREME KHADOUR!
BEFORE YOU THINK OF TRYING TO LEAVE US AGAIN, TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT THIS BABY!
THE GREAT PHALIX!
I AM XIRAK THE GREAT PHALIX IS THE NAME OF MY HUMAN FORM.
THAT'S HIS BODY AND HIS VOICE, BUT THAT'S NOT HIM TALKING. HE HAS THAT FILTHY BRAINSUCKER ON HIS HEAD!
FORWARD! WE'VE LOST ENOUGH TIME AS IT IS!

GET THIS SHIP OFF THE GROUND, WE'VE GOT TO GET BACK TO THE LAB!
WE ARE GOING TO CARRY OUT A FEW EXPERIMENTS ON OUR NEW SPECIMENS! THIS SHALL PROVE VERY INTERESTING!
EXPERIMENTS? US TWO? IS THAT REALLY NECESSARY?
SHUT UP AND KEEP MOVING! THE SUPREME KHADOUR HAS GROWN EVEN MORE IMPATIENT SINCE YOUR LAST ESCAPE ATTEMPT

AAAHHH! WHAT IS THAT?
WE ARE IN THE MAIN OLD WHERE MY FELLOW CREATURES ARE SLEEPING PEACEFULLY
WHILE AWAITING THE NEW WORLD
THAT'S WHAT YOU ARE PLANNING, ISN'T IT?
YOU WANT TO INVADE US!
BUT THERE ARE MILLIONS OF THEM I THINK I AM BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND NOW

ENOUGH! IF ONLY YOU KNEW THE GLORIOUS DESTINY THAT AWAITS YOUR PRIMITIVE RACE!
I CAN ASSURE YOU, SUPREME KHADOUR, WE UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE AND ADVANTAGES OF A SYMBIOTIC UNION BETWEEN THE HUMAN SPECIES AND YOURS
HOWEVER...
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, TOBOR?
Pinky
WELL, I'D AGREE WITH THAT
THE MECHANICAL CREATURE HAS MORE SENSE THAN HIS FRIEND
AND WE WILL PROVE THIS, PINKY. WHY DON'T YOU DO A STRIP TEASE FOR US?
D'YA HAVE A SCREW LOOSE UP IN THAT IRON HEAD OF YOURS?
...HOWEVER, I DON'T BELIEVE OUR HUMANITY IS WORTHY OF YOUR INTEREST
!?

IF YOU WANT TO SEE MEGALOPOLIS AGAIN
I'D SUGGEST YOU UNDRESS IN THE MOST SEXUAL WAY POSSIBLE.
NO! I WON'T! HEY, STOP THAT!
IT'S XIRAK! WHAT'S GOING ON IN THERE?
Z
RHAAAAAA
PINKY, LET HIM DO IT!
Z
RHHHH
HEY!

HELP! HE'S GONE CRAZY!
NNGGG'
DO SOMETHING!
WHAT IS GOING ON THERE? WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES XIRAK LOSE CONTROL LIKE THIS?
SEX'
WHAT DO YOU MEAN SEX?
YOU CAN'T MEAN THAT THE HUMAN RACE IS STILL DOMINATED BY BESTIALITY!
AND YOU? WHAT DO YOU DO FOR
WE NO LONGER NEED SUCH RUDIMENTARY PRACTICES. WE REPRODUCE BY PARTHENO-GENESIS. THERE ARE MANY DISADVANTAGES TO YOUR FORM OF MATING. HEARTBREAK, NEVER-ENDING DESIRES, NOT TO MENTION HERPES UNFORTUNATELY, OUR FORM OF PROCREATION IS NOT A HELLUVA LOT FUN. THUS, OUR PEOPLE LOST INTEREST. ALAS, WE ARE A VERY SMALL, UNSATISFIED GROUP. BUT THINGS COULD ALWAYS CHANGE
AND SO, BEFORE YOUR RACE TOTALLY DISAPPEARS, WE MUST FIND OTHER RACES WE CAN "MAKE WHOOPEE"... OH, EXCUSE ME. WITH
12

WE CANNOT DISAPPEAR WE ARE THE MOST HIGHLY EVOLVED SPECIES IN THE UNIVERSE!
WELL, UNFORTUNATELY WE COUNTED ON YOU HUMANS
BUT I GUESS WE'LL HAVE TO LOOK FURTHER
I'LL HAVE A SHIP RETURN YOU TO YOUR HOMELAND
IF I UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE SAYING, WE HUMANS AREN'T GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU.
EXACTLY
GET DRESSED WERE LEAVING
HOW WERE YOU SO SURE THAT MY STRIP TEASE WAS GOING TO WORK?
BECAUSE I HAPPEN TO KNOW THAT HE IS THE GURU OF THE HIGH ORDER OF VIRGIN WORSHIPPERS NEED I SPELL IT OUT FOR YOU, PINKY?
13

WE WILL BE ABLE TO SEE MEGALOPOLIS IN ABOUT FIVE MINUTES
THE GREAT PHALIX DOESN'T SEEM TO BE FEELING TOO WELL
ARE YOU SURE THERE ARE PLENTY OF VIRGINS DOWN THERE?

END

BIP BIP BIP BIP
THE SIGNAL! THEY'VE ELIMINATED NUMBER TWO! IT'S MY TURN NOW! I AM THE LAST HOPE
FOR ONE QUARTER by Jimino
THE FIRST PART IS EASY AS LONG AS I DON'T BUMP INTO THE GREAT SPHERE!
...M I DREAD WE THOUGHT OF THAT POWERFUL SPHERE! 'TS BEEN KNOWN TO ...L ON CONTACT
AND IT'S IM- PERVIOUS TO EVERYTHING!

EP...
THERE'S NUMBER ONE—HE WAS ABOUT TO ENTER THE LABYRINTH
MY GOD! HE'S A MESS! HE MUST HAVE TOUCHED THE WALLS! THEY'RE CHARGED WITH ENERGY!
FROM NOW ON, I'D BETTER BE MORE CAREFUL

THERE'S ANOTHER ROBOT!
AND ANOTHER ONE BEHIND ME!

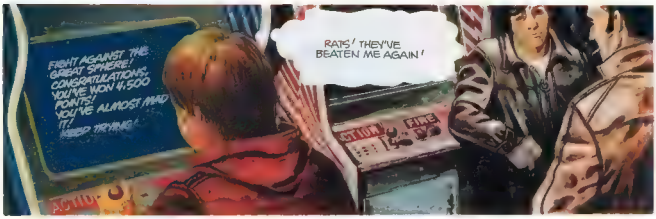
PHEW. THAT WAS CLOSE!
THE MEM-SIGN I'M HALF WAY THERE! FROM HERE ON IN, IT SHOULD BE.
SMOOTH SAILING! NOW THEY WILL GRANT ME IMMUNITY TO THE WALLS!
CONTACT SHOULD NO LONGER BE DEADLY!
HERE'S WHERE THEY CAUGHT NUMBER TWO. WHAT A PITY... HE WAS JUST ABOUT TO MAKE IT!
HEY!

AAAAAAH
SHIT! I BURNED MY ARM!
MY ARM IS KILLING ME, BUT I'VE GOT TO GO ON!
IT'S ONE QUARTER! THE LAST QUARTER!

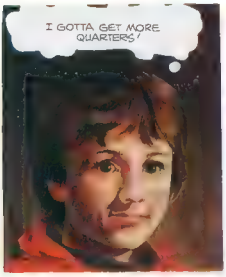
I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH MORE OF THIS I CAN TAKE!
I'VE GOT TO GO ON!
GO AWAY!
LEAVE ME ALONE!
THE EXIT, FOR GOD'S SAKE! WHERE IS THE EXIT?

AT LAST! I'VE FOUND IT!
WHAT'S THAT NOISE? IT'S COMING TOWARDS ME! IT CAN'T BE!
THE GREAT SPHERE!
THE DOOR! THE DOOR! OPEN UP, DAMN YOU!
OPEN UP!.. OPEN UP!
NO!!!

OH, NO!


FIGHT AGAINST THE GREAT SPHERE! CONGRATULATIONS, YOU'VE WON 4,500 POINTS! YOU'VE ALMOST HAD IT! KEEP TRYING!
RATS! THEY'VE BEATEN ME AGAIN!

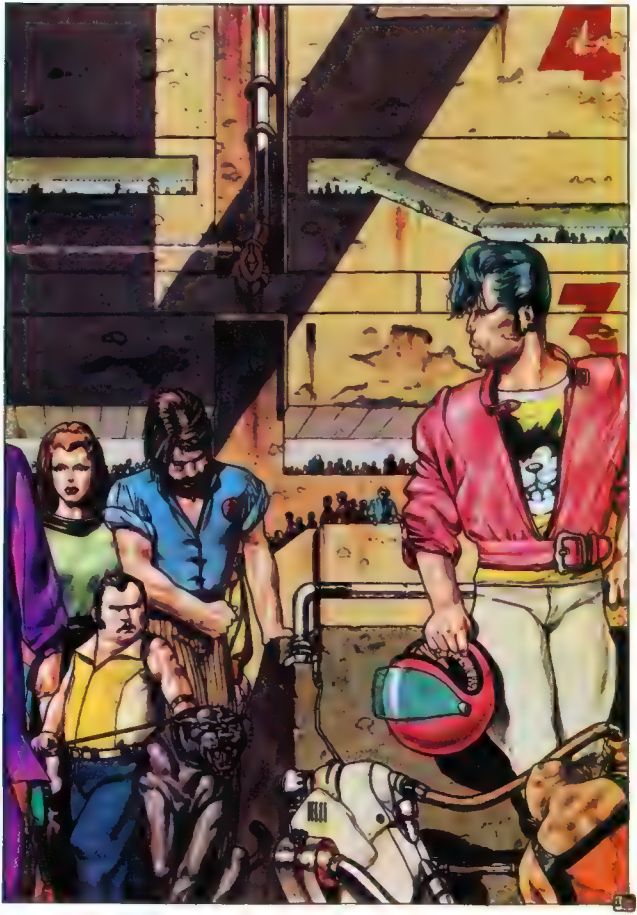
ELECTRONIC GAMES
NOW I HAVE NO MONEY FOR THE SUBWAY!

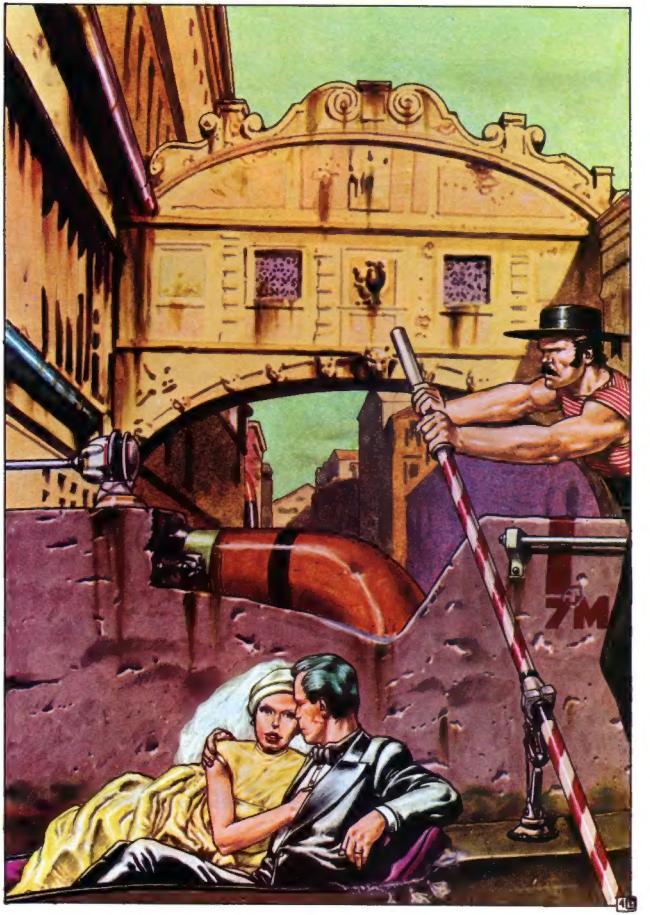

I GOTTA GET MORE QUARTERS!

OUTTA MY WAY! ER, EXCUSE ME! OUTTA MY WAY! MOM!

THE END

Love Ain't Nothin' But Evol Spelled Backwards by Liberatore




7M

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